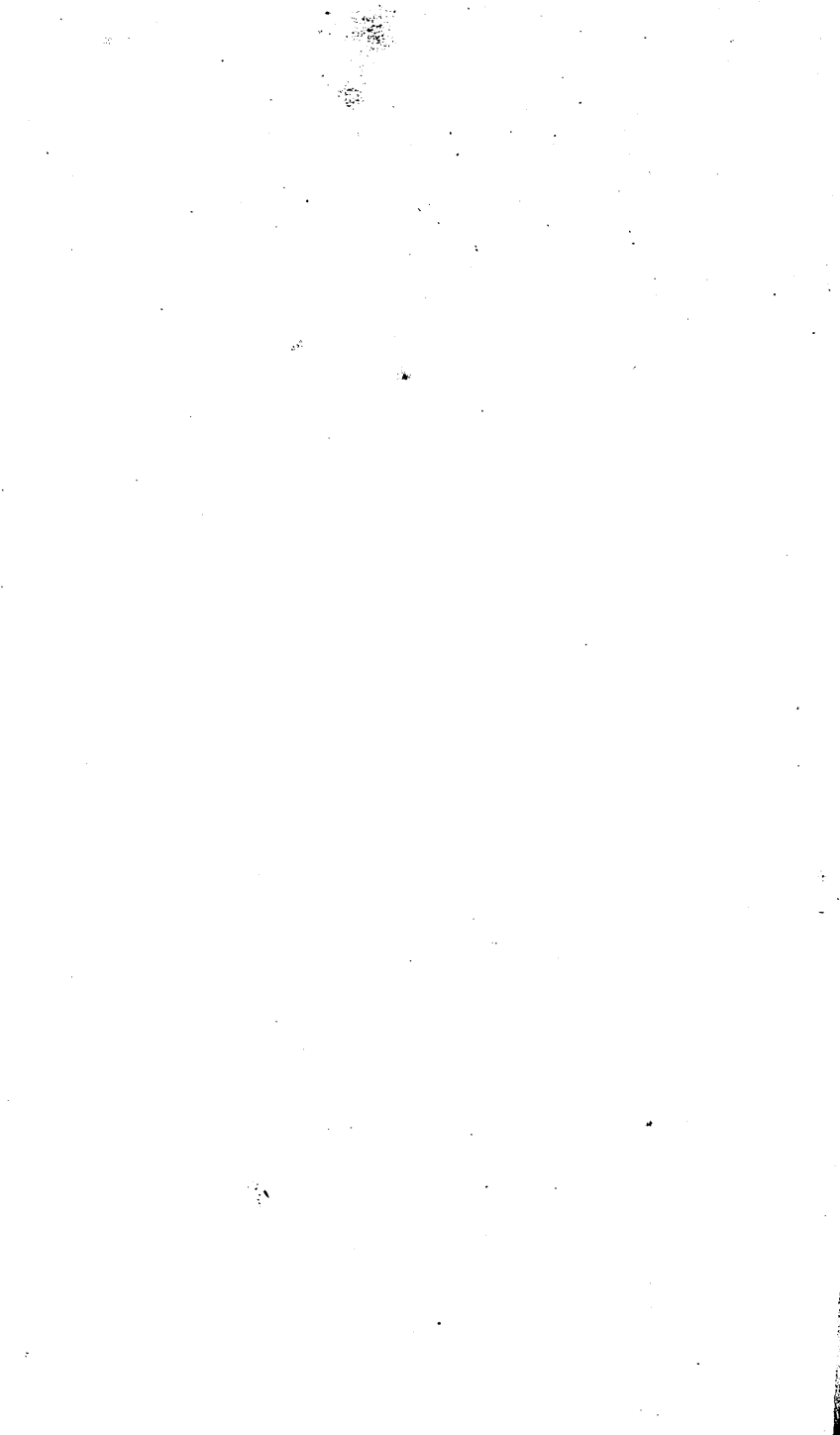


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PASTORAL LETTERS,

FROM

THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS.

TO

THE CLERGY AND MEMBERS

OF THE

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH

IN THE

United States of America. House of Bishops

PHILADELPHIA:

EDWARD C. BIDDLE, No. 6 SOUTH FIFTH STREET.

1845.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE PASTORAL LETTERS of the House of Bishops are issued at every General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States—assembling once in three years. The first was prepared in 1808, according to the provisions of the eleventh canon, which had been passed upon this subject in the previous general convention of 1804. The provisions of this canon have since been incorporated in the eighth canon of 1841. This canon requires that the triennial report prepared by the committee on the state of the church in the house of clerical and lay deputies, “when agreed to by the said house, shall be sent to the house of bishops, with a request that they will draw up, and cause to be published, a pastoral letter to the members of the church: and it is hereby made the duty of every clergyman having a pastoral charge, when any such letter is published, to read the said pastoral letter to his congregation, on some occasion of public worship.” In conformity to this law of the church, a pastoral letter has been issued at every succeeding general convention, amounting now to thirteen. They are not only in themselves documents of great wisdom and value, and worthy on this account of the most reverent consideration from the members of the church to whom they are addressed, but they

are also the solemn expressions of judgment and instruction upon the points of which they treat, of the highest ecclesiastical authority of the church. Prepared according to the requirement of the law of the general convention by the house of bishops, at the request of the house of clerical and lay deputies, and then read to them, and ordered to be published by them—they have no less force and authority than the canon itself. They therefore come forth as the highest expressions of ecclesiastical authority to the church, and claim the submission and uniformity of all its members to the judgments which they proclaim. In this view, they are of great consequence, and the publication and perpetuating of them in an accessible form among the members of the church becomes an important benefit. No occasion in earthly things could be more serious and impressive than the publication of such a document in such a manner. In an assembly of our highest ecclesiastical council of “apostles, elders, and brethren,” gathered from every portion of our wide-spread country, after united deliberation and prayer, may we not justly say, not without the promised presence and aid of that Divine Spirit who is to abide with the church according to the Saviour’s word, an address is prepared and solemnly considered and adopted, to be sent abroad to all the members of the “household of faith,” which is thus represented and governed. It treats of the most serious and important subjects. It presents instructions deemed most adapted to the condition and wants of the church. It exhibits them and discusses them in a way most calculated to

awaken attention and command respect. It goes forth, the language of the church to its members,—including in itself all the authority which there is in the ministry of the Gospel, for it is the testimony of many ministers united ; and all the power to speak the truth of God, which resides in his church, for it is the action and address of the church in its supreme earthly legislation. Can any document or occasion, less than absolute Divine inspiration, have more authority, or a more just claim to reverence, obedience and respect, from the members of the church? Such are the pastoral letters, here for the first time collected and published in a single volume. They should be read and considered by all. They are the voice of the church to ministers and people. They are the decisions of the church in many important points of doctrine. They are the instructions of the church on the subjects and articles of which they treat. Let them be regarded and revered as such by all. The publisher who has thus issued them in this portable form, and at whose request this notice has been prepared, has conferred a benefit upon us, which we doubt not will be estimated and rewarded. That they can be thus widely circulated and placed within the reach of all the members of our church, must be considered by us a very great and desirable advantage.

S. H. T.

PHILADELPHIA,
January, 1845.



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Chas. A. Thompson

PASTORAL LETTER No. I.

FROM THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL
CHURCH, ASSEMBLED IN GENERAL CONVENTION AT BALTI-
MORE, MAY, A. D. 1808, TO THE MEMBERS OF SAID CHURCH.

BRETHREN,

BEING assembled in general convention, with the clerical and lay deputies of our communion, we embrace the opportunity of addressing you on its concerns. But before we proceed to the subjects of advice contemplated by us on this occasion, we lift up our hearts to the Father of mercies, thanking him for our being in possession of all that we esteem necessary for the professing of his holy and eternal truth. And while we ascribe this benefit to his unbounded goodness, we recognize in it the truth of the promises made to the church by her divine Head, of being with her to the end of the world.

It is within the memory of many of you, that when these states, in the course of divine Providence, became elevated to a place among the nations of the earth; and when, in consequence, our congregations, planted under the jurisdiction of the Church of England, were withdrawn from it, they had no longer any common centre of union; being not only without an entire ministry, but severally in a state of separate independence, inconsistent with the catholic

principles which they had inherited from their founders. Under these circumstances, there was required no small measure of faith, as well in the integrity of our system, as in the Divine blessing on any endeavours which might be begun, to elevate us above those apprehensions which described the continuance of our communion as problematical, if not to be despaired of.

From correspondence in some instances, and from personal communications in others, it soon appeared, that there was at least so much attachment to the religious principles of our church, as ought to prevent our considering of her cause as desperate. The correctness of this sentiment became confirmed, by connections, speedily created, of our churches, until then detached from one another, on terms which contemplated the perpetuating of the communion, with all the distinguishing properties of the Church of England. And the unanimity with which this was accomplished, afforded a pleasing presage of whatever else we now gratefully remember.

We were, however, without that order of the ministry, which we had learned from Scripture and primitive antiquity, to be essential to the due conducting of ecclesiastical concerns; and to the clothing of others with authority to preach the word, and to administer the sacraments. The effects of this had become conspicuous, during the war then recently ended; in the course of which, the greater number of our congregations had become deprived of their ministers, without opportunities of replacing them. Matters were approaching to the extreme in which the voice of a duly authorized ministry would not have been heard within our walls. And what deepened the gloom of the prospect, were the restraints laid on our former ecclesiastical superiors, by the establishments under which they held their stations; and which, unless removed by authorities to which

we could not, with propriety, apply, might prevent them from extending to us that aid, which, it was presumed, their Christian charity would otherwise dispose them to bestow.

Under these circumstances, recourse was had to the archbishops and bishops of England, who best knew the nature of any civil impediments in their way, and were the best judges of the means expedient for the removing of them. That we now address you in our official characters, is an evidence of the success of the application. And it ought not to be noticed in this place, without the record of a debt of gratitude to the prelates of England generally, and to their lately deceased venerable primate* in particular, who exerted all the influence of his high station, to accomplish the wishes of this church; and who, at last, carried them into effect, with a deportment which endeared his character to those who received the succession from his hands. While we thus do justice to the source to which we principally looked in consequence of past habits and a sense of past benefits, it is with pleasure we acknowledge a similar debt of gratitude to the episcopacy which, in Scotland, survived the revolution in that country in the year 1688. Although the succession thence derived is now incorporated with that obtained from England, yet we retain a sense of the benefit, and offer up our prayers for the perpetuity and the increase of the Episcopal Church of Scotland.

Even when the succession had been obtained, there was far from being a certainty of combining our church throughout the union. An important step for the accomplishing of this, was the uniting in a common liturgy. And although there was reason to believe, that the liturgy of the Church of England was substantially acceptable to us all, yet there

* The Most Rev. John Moore, D. D., late Archbishop of Canterbury.

were some parts of it utterly inconsistent with the new relations in which we stood; while, in regard to the rest, there was room for considerable difference of opinion, on points confessedly within the sphere of human prudence. The case was full of difficulties; which were at last removed by that consent in all things necessary, and that temper of concession in matters subjected to discretion, which led to the establishment of the Book of Common Prayer, now the standard of the public worship of our church.

There remained a work, in itself more fruitful than any hitherto noticed, of discord and dissent. Our church had not made a profession of Christian doctrine, with a reference to the points on which it has been contradicted, by what we conceive to be dangerous error. It is true, that the Articles of the Church of England, except the parts of them abrogated by the Revolution, might still be considered as binding on churches which had been founded on a profession of them. There was, however, wanting an explicit declaration to silence all doubt, in regard to their binding operation. And this, although a matter encumbered with much embarrassment, was at last happily effected.

Whatever labours, and whatever cares there may have been bestowed for the accomplishing of the objects stated in this address, there must have been an ample compensation for them, in an observation of their effects. These are, indeed, far short of our wishes, and what should still be the object of our endeavours: yet it must be confessed, that there has not only been an arresting of the state of decline which threatened a dissolution, but such a religious prosperity in many places, and such a prospect of it in many more, as are at once a reward of zeal and an incentive to it. By communications made to us from the church in several states, in obedience to the 11th canon of the last general convention, we have been favoured with a more

satisfactory view of this subject than had been before possessed by us. While we record this, we take occasion from it to express our expectations, that similar reports will be more generally transmitted to the next triennial meeting. For we have to lament, that the communications exacted by the said canon, have not been universal ; owing, perhaps, to its not having been sufficiently made known ; or, perhaps, to there not having been sufficiently understood the object of it. We are not to learn how far such returns must be, from an exact measure of the power of godliness. Yet, where there is a growth of the profession of religion, there is occasion for charity to hope, and even ground in human nature to justify the belief, that there must be, in some proportion, an increase of its holy influence over the heart.

While we look back with gratitude on the blessings of Almighty God, vouchsafed to our communion, it is for the purpose of a due improvement of them, that we now present them to the view of its members : and, for the accomplishment of this, we invite their attention to the resulting considerations, as they affect *doctrine—worship—discipline*—and the end of all, an *holy life and conversation*.

In regard to *doctrine* ; although it would be foreign to the design of this address, to display to you the whole body of Christian truth, as affirmed in the Articles of our church ; yet we think ourselves called on by the occasion, to refer to some points, the contrary to which are the most apt to show their heads, among persons calling themselves of our communion. For the guarding of you, therefore, against that great danger, we affectionately remind you, that whatever derogates from the divinity of our blessed Saviour, or from the honour due to the Holy Spirit, with the Father and with the Son, divine ; that whatever detracts from our Lord's sufferings on the cross, as a propitiatory sacrifice for sin ; that whatever supposes man in himself competent to

his salvation, or to any advance towards it, without the grace of God going before to dispose him to the work, and concurring with him in the accomplishment of it; also, that whatever describes the favour of God in this life, and the happiness which he offers to us in another, as the purchase of human merit, or any thing else than of the free grace of God in Christ, and through the merits of his death; still, in connection with its end, which is the bringing of us to be holy in heart and in conversation; in short, that whatever is in the least degree infected with the poison of the recited errors, was intended to be guarded against by our church, in her decisions in regard to doctrine.

We are not ignorant of the prejudices which represent all ecclesiastical decisions on these and like points, as the arbitrary acts of man, interfering with the word of God revealed in Scripture. And we are ready to acknowledge that, did this charge lie, the matter censured would be not only presumptuous in itself, but especially inconsistent in a church which has so explicitly declared her sense, that the Scriptures contain all things necessary to belief and practice. Let it then be understood, that we disclaim all idea of adding to the word of God, or of its being infallibly interpreted by any authority on earth. Still, it lies on the ministers of the church to open to their flocks the truths of Scripture, and to guard them against interfering errors. What, then, is the making of a declaration of the sense of the church, but her doing that as a social body, which must be done by her pastors individually; although, as may be supposed in some instances, not with due judgment and deliberation? It is evident, indeed, that this does not answer the objection in another shape in which it meets us—the supposed hardship laid on those who are otherwise minded, than as the standard may have prescribed. Still, the church exercises in this matter no power, but such as must be exercised by every

minister in his individual capacity, under the danger of great abuse; the effect of there being always the interference of discretion, and sometimes that of passion. To go no further than to the few evangelic truths which have been referred to: there is no faithful minister of Christ who will endure the denial of them, in a church under his pastoral care, and in circumstances in which there shall be no authority superior to his own, for the remedying of the evil; and not exercise that authority, within its reasonable limits, in order to defend his flock from errors. Thus, there would and ought to be accomplished by the individual, in the event of the silence of the church, what she has rescued from arbitrary will, and made the subject of deliberate law.

While we exhort all to sustain the evangelic truths found in the Articles, as deduced from Scripture and attested by the earliest ages of catholic Christianity, we would particularly impress on the clergy, not only a sufficient frequency in professedly stating to their hearers the same truths, but also to manifest their salutary influence on all the other subjects of their public administrations. We are aware of the interference of this advice, with the opinion that mere morals are the only suitable topics of discussion, and the only ends of exhortation, in discourses from the pulpit. Far be from us the thought of assigning to morals, considered as comprehending not only a correct course of conduct, but an holy state of heart, a subordinate rank in the scale of Christian endowment. For what is morality, thus defined, but "the living godly, righteously and soberly in this present world," which an apostle has pronounced the very end for which "the grace of God, bringing salvation to all men, hath appeared?" But when we take in connection with the subject, the depravity of the human heart; when we recollect the influence of this, wherever the Gospel is unknown, as well on the theory of morals as on practice; and when there

are many evidences before our eyes, how little there is in the world adorned by the attribute of moral virtue, in any other association than as imbodyed with, and growing out of the high and leading sense of revelation ; we suppose a fallacy in every modern scheme of religion, which professes to make men virtuous without the motives to virtue supplied to them in the Gospel ; and we think, that, in every endeavour of this sort, in which infidelity is not avowed, we discover it in disguise.

Let there not be thought an objection to what we advise, in the unreasonable conduct of those who, in their zeal for unprofitable speculation, lose sight of every practical use for which Christian light has been bestowed. We believe, that from this there have arisen many errors and much mischief. But we are so far from admitting it to be a reasonable cause of dispensing with the matter of our present exhortation, that we perceive, even in the errors the nearest allied to the truths of Scripture with which they are confounded, a motive to the laying of a due stress on these truths.

We shall say no more on the present branch of this address, except to assure our brethren of every description in the church, that as, according to our judgment, any preaching, falling short of what is here held up, is not that which the Gospel calls for ; so, according to our experience, neither is it of any considerable use. It has but little effect on the morals of society ; still less in the excitement of piety ; and least of all, in enlarging the bounds of the kingdom of the Redeemer, which is established on quite another basis, and has always been extended by quite other means.

When we bring before you, brethren, the subject of *public worship*, you will of course suppose, that it is principally with a view to the devotions, which, with an

extraordinary degree of harmony and much previous deliberation, have been constituted our established liturgy.

Independently of the admirable prayer prescribed by our Lord himself,* there is no fact equally ancient, of which we are more fully persuaded, than that the having of prescribed devotions, is a practice that has prevailed from the earliest origin of our religion. We mean not, that there were the same forms of prayer in all churches; but that every local church had its rule, according to the suitableness of time and place, and under the sanction of the episcopacy of the different districts. And we are further persuaded, that the Christian economy in this matter was no other than a continuation of the Jewish, as prevailing in that very worship which was attended on, and joined in, by our blessed Saviour and his apostles. This is a mode of worship that has been handed down to us through the channel of the Church of England; and we suppose that we may affirm, as a notorious fact, its being acceptable to our communion generally.

* The Lord's prayer is given to us by St. Luke (chap. xi. 2.) under the injunction—"When ye pray, say"—which is evidently language expressive of the appointment of a form. But the construction has been thought to sustain an abatement of its force by the words in the parallel place of St. Matthew (chap. vi. 9.)—"After this manner pray ye." There is, however, no difference of sense in the two places. The Greek word *εἰς τὰς*, translated "after this manner," may be rendered "thus;" that is, "in these words." For that either of the two phrases would have expressed the meaning, appears from chap. ii. 5, of the same evangelist. When Herod had demanded of the Sanhedrim—"Where Christ should be born," they made answer—"In Bethlehem, of Judea; for thus [*εἰς τὴν*] it is written by the prophet." Then they go on to repeat the prophet's words—"And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a governor, who shall rule my people Israel."

But if this feature of our system is to be retained, we cannot but perceive, that the order of Divine service must be directed, not by individual discretion, but by public counsel. If, on the contrary, this principle is to cease to govern, we know of no plea for deviation tolerated in any minister, which will not extend to the indulgence of the humour of every member of his congregation. For this is a necessary result of that property of our ecclesiastical system, which contemplates the exercises of prayer and praise as those of a social body, of which the minister is the leader.

If there should be in any a rage for innovation, it would be the more deplored by us, from the circumstance that it often originates in the affecting of an extravagant degree of animal sensibility; which, it must be confessed, will not be either excited or kept alive by the temperate devotions of our prescribed liturgy. There are but few prayers handed down to us in the New Testament: If, however, any who may be advocates of an enthusiastic fervour would duly contemplate the spirit that animates these prayers, they would not, we think, undervalue those of the church, as though they were uninteresting to the best affections of the human heart.

It is impossible that there should be composed forms for public use, and yet that individuals should not perceive instances in which, according to their respective habits of thinking, the matter might have been more judiciously conceived, or more happily expressed. It is, however evident, that this, far from being prevented, would be much increased, by removing the subject from the controlling authority of the church, to that of her ministers in their respective places. The cause of the supposed evil is an imperfection in human affairs, to which they will be always liable; and a temper to accommodate to it, is an essential circumstance of

a worthy membership of society, whether civil or religious. The dissatisfaction alluded to may affect either circumstantial, or the essence of the established liturgy. If it apply to the former, submission of private opinion is one of the smallest sacrifices which may be exacted, for the maintenance of order. But if any should lightly esteem the service, from the opinion that it is below the dignity of the subjects comprehended in it, and unequal to the uses which prayers and praises point to, we have so much to oppose to such a sentiment, in the sense of wise and holy men of our communion in former ages, still shining as lights to the world in their estimable writings; so much, also, in the acknowledgment of judicious persons not of our communion, both in past ages and in the present; and so much of the effects of the habitual use of the liturgy, on the tempers and on the lives of persons, who, in their respective days, have eminently "adorned the doctrine of their God and Saviour," that, if we spare an appeal to the modesty of the complainants, we are constrained to make a demand on their justice; and, in the name of all true members of our communion, to insist on being left in the secure possession of a mode of worship, which has become endeared to us by habit and by choice. It is on this ground, that we consider every churchman as possessing a personal right to lift up his voice against the intermixture of foreign matter with the service; rendering it such, as can never be acceptable to the same judgments, or interesting to the same affections.

In regard to any license which may be taken of another kind, that of varying words or phrases, for an accommodation to the reader's ideas of correct expression; to any minister who may be tempted to this fault, we intimate, that it has the effect of subjecting him to the imputation of a species of levity which breeds contempt. Certainly, every consideration which should relieve him from the charge of

error, would proportionably expose him to that of vanity. But, whether it be error or vanity, the fault of wanton irregularity is attached to it.

Under the operation of the sentiments which have been delivered, we should be especially grieved to hear of any ministers, that they make the services of the church give way to their own crude conceptions. We call them such, because it may be expected from experience of former times, that a practice so irregular in itself, would be generally found in those who have the most moderate share of the knowledge and the discretion, qualifying for a judicious exercise of the authority thus arrogated. While we earnestly admonish all ministers against this assumption of a power not committed to them, we also exhort the laity to avoid encouragement of the delinquency, should it happen, and, much more, inducement to it. We know that the most intelligent and best informed lay members of our communion, if this license should be obtruded on them, would disapprove of it; and, if they did not complain in public, would mourn in private. Even of those who, in any way, might countenance the irregularity, we should hope that they either did not know or did not recollect the sacred promises which would be hereby broken. And, on the whole, we announce, both to the clergy and to the laity, our utter disapprobation of the irregularity here remarked on; calling on every one of them, in his place, to give his aid to the guarding against the evil; both by persuasion and by every other temperate expedient provided by the canons of the church.

We cannot be on this subject without lamenting, that, of a service in itself so full of edification, a considerable proportion of the due effect should be defeated, in consequence not of disapprobation or dislike, but of neglect of joining in it, as in heart, so likewise audibly and in the prescribed

postures. We pray you, brethern, not to impute what we say on this point to a zeal for mere decorous appearance. We do not, indeed, hesitate to acknowledge, even of this, that it is a laudable object of endeavour. But the matters on which we have laid a stress, are supposed by us to be considerably connected with the devotion of the inward man. It is one of the properties of social worship, that, of those engaged in it, every one may excite and receive excitement from the others. And, indeed, when we open the uses of such worship, in order to demonstrate the reasonableness of its being required, this is the point on which the weight of the argument principally rests. If the present view of the subject be correct, the omissions complained of reach much deeper than to the deforming of the service, and disclose to us how much there may be imputed to this cause, of the entire neglect of it by many. And even if the other only were the consequence, it ought to have great weight; especially since, if the omission were defensible, the service has been constructed on a mistaken plan, which occasions its excellency to be in a great measure lost sight of, in the inconsistent manner of the performance.

There is another department of our religious worship, necessarily left in some measure to discretion, which we know to be much abused in many places, and have reason to believe to be so in many more; not intentionally, either by ministers or by their congregations, but probably to the dissatisfaction of both, yet too patiently endured by them. What we allude to, is the manner in which there is sometimes conducted the otherwise pleasing and edifying exercise of psalmody. In this line there are employed persons, who, being regardless alike of godliness and of decency, presume to set themselves in contrariety to all the uses, for which alone the art of music can with propriety display its charms within the house of God. Thus, there are outraged the

feelings of all devout persons ; and not of them only, but of all who entertain a sense of consistency and propriety. On the ratifying of the Book of Common Prayer, an endeavour was made to give a check to this enormity, by the rubric preceding the psalms in metre. We desire to recall the attention of the church generally, and of the clergy in particular, to the provisions of that rubric. And we further recommend to all those who have the appointment of performers in the musical department, that, if possible, none may be appointed in whom there is not found a visible profession of religion, in alliance with an irreproachable conversation. But if, in any instance, it should be thought that the profession must of necessity be dispensed with, let it at the most be in favour of persons who are not capable of dishonouring the worship of Almighty God, and of disgusting those who join in it: for this is a censure which we do not hesitate to lay on the conduct which has been referred to.

From worship we proceed to *discipline*. And here we wish our clerical and our lay brethren to be aware, as, on one hand of the responsibility under which we lie, so on the other, of the caution which justice and impartiality require. The church has made provision for the degradation of unworthy clergymen. It is for us to suppose that there are none of that description until the contrary is made known to us in our respective places, in the manner which the canons have prescribed: and if the contrary to what we wish is, in any instance, to be found, it lies on you, our clerical and lay brethren, to present such faulty conduct; although with due regard to proof, and, above all, in a temper which shows the impelling motive to be the glory of God, and the sanctity of the reputation of his church.

While we are not conscious of any bias, which, under an official call, would prevent the conscientious discharge

of duty, we wish to be explicit in making known to all, that we think it due to God and to his church, to avoid whatever may sanction assumed power, however desirable the end to which it may be directed. We have, at least, as weighty reasons to restrain us from judging without inquiry, and from censuring without evidence of crime. These are ends, to which men of impetuous spirits would sometimes draw. But we would rather subject ourselves to the charge of indifference, however little merited, than be the mean of establishing precedents, giving to slander an advantage, against which no innocence can be a shield; and leaving to no man a security either of interest or of reputation. Although we have no reason to complain, that sentiments in contrariety to these prevail among us to any considerable extent, yet we freely deliver our sentiments on the subject, in order to give us an opportunity of calling on all wise and good men—and we shall not call on them in vain—to aid us in resisting, wherever it may appear, that mischievous spirit which confounds right and wrong, in judging of the characters and of the rights of others.

We should not discharge our consciences, could we be on this part of the subject, without declaring unequivocally our hope, that the time will come, when there shall not be acknowledged, even as nominally of our society, any person of an immoral life and conversation. We are not unapprized of the property of the Christian church stamped on it by the hand of its holy Author, that it was to comprehend the opposite characters of good and bad, until the appointed time of an eternal separation. But this, as is evident, relates to the hearts of men, which cannot be known to one another. Every notorious sinner is a scandal to the church of Christ, although he may be less guilty in the sight of God than some hypocrite, whose depravity lies concealed within her pale. Still, it must be acknowledged,

that there is no Christian work more full of embarrassment, than the one here referred to: And we freely confess, that it were better left undone for ever, than to be accomplished at the expense of the violation of impartiality, much more of the gratification of malice. Still, the presenting of this object to your view, is what the integrity of the Christian economy requires of us. Until it can be brought about, let us at least fence the table of the Lord, from the unhallowed approach of every ungodly liver. And while we address this admonition especially to our brethren of the clergy, we rejoice in the conviction, that there is no part of their duty which they can execute, if it be done with a good conscience and with prudence, to the more entire satisfaction of the people generally. For there are few, perhaps none, disposed to tolerate the profanation of an ordinance, of which there is, on the part of so many, a neglect.

But while we thus admonish our brethren of the ministry to guard against the profanation of the eucharist, we ought not to lose the opportunity of exhorting them to increase the number of the attendants on it, as by all proper means, so especially, by opening the nature of the apostolic rite of confirmation, and by persuading to an observance of it. Were it an institution of human origin, we should admire it for its tendency to impress, on persons advancing to maturity, a sense of obligations resting on them, independently on their consent, in this ordinance voluntarily given. But we remind our brethren, knowing that they agree with us in the opinion, that it was ordained and practised by the apostles of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and that, in the ages immediately subsequent to the age of the apostles, it was one of the means of exciting to the sublime virtue which adorned them. Let us remember that the same grace, first given in baptismal regeneration, is increased and strengthened by confirmation. And let us ex-

tend the use of this holy and apostolic rite, as one of the first principles of the Christian religion, and a great mean of leading on towards that perfection of Christian morals, which is its object.

When we look back on the subjects of this address, we find ourselves impelled, by their united force, to direct our attention to an object deeply interesting to us, as members of the Episcopal church, of the Catholic church at large, and of civil society, with a due regard to its prosperity and its peace. What we mean, is the taking of our share of the work of extending Christian preaching and worship, to the states recently risen, and to those still rising, within our federal republic. It is an effect of the civil privileges which we enjoy, and of the honourable exertions which they prompt, that useless forests become changed to cultivated fields, and that the reign of science and civilization supplants that of ignorance and barbarism. But this will be far from an addition to the stock of human happiness, if, on such improvement, there be entailed the effect of a population let loose from the restraints of religion; without which, the most estimable refinements of society only make men the more ferocious, and the more mischievous to one another. We have, however, no considerable apprehension that this will be the result. The progressive property of the kingdom of the Redeemer, stamped on it by his own unerring hand; and, harmonizing with this, the consent of prophecy, as well under the law as under the Gospel; make us believe the contrary: and, on the ground of the designs of Providence, disclosed in Scripture, we look forward to the time when, over the whole extent of the regions beyond us, there shall ascend to heaven the incense of evangelical prayer and praise; and there shall be presented the peace-offering of the commemorative sacrifice of the passion of the Redeemer. But while we rejoice in all suitable

means conducted with a view to this end, under any systems, not so agreeable as we suppose our own to the word of God, we are urged to an extension of the latter, by every consideration which is an evidence to us of its superior usefulness. If, in reference to those regions spoken of, there be wanting any further inducement to a compliance with this Gospel call, we may remind you of some extravagances which we have heard of as there prevalent; assuming the name of the religion of Jesus, but alien from its blessed nature; and tending, as we presume to say from observation of the same cause, and its effects more within the spheres of our observation, eventually to increase that infidelity, which wages open war on whatever piety holds sacred, and which is covertly pernicious to whatever humanity has reason to esteem. During the present session, our minds have been much impressed by a sense of what is due from us to our western brethren, and especially to those of them professing themselves of our communion. We wish to extend to them the episcopacy and the celebration of the worship of this church: And we invite all our brethren now addressed, to aid us in the accomplishment of these objects; and, until it shall be found practicable to avail themselves of any opportunities occurring, to encourage the settlement of suitable ministers of this church, who may be disposed to remove from the elder states into that vast field of labour. And we further invite ministers and other members of our communion, who may be already seated in those districts, to aid us in carrying our purposes into effect; and, in the mean time, if it be practicable, to make such internal organizations as may conduce to it.

But, brethren, we wish it to be understood, in what we have brought before you, relative to doctrine, to worship, and to discipline, that it is all with a view to *practice*, in order to call on and entreat you, as a religious body, "to

walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called ;” illustrating the evangelic properties of your religious system, in its being seen to be productive of a religious life and conversation. The clergy, in particular, we exhort to remember the holy walking attached to the heavenly designation of their ministry, and with this their own assent, in the promises made by them at ordination, to the responsibility in which they stand. And we remind the laity, that, in respect to the obligation of Christian morals, there is no difference of extent over the different orders in the church, whatever aggravation there be of delinquency in some, in consequence of the especial obligations which they have assumed.

In thus exciting you to *Christian virtue*, we find ourselves drawn to the contemplating of it, in an alliance with the more conspicuous relations in which the providence of God has placed you.

And, first, when we consider you as citizens, and in relation to the state, we exhort you not to view your character in this respect, as if it were unconnected with Christian obligation ; not only that which Christianity enjoins, under all circumstances, of submission to law and government, and of reverence of those who are clothed with its authorities ; but also the temperate exercise of the rights provided for by the liberal genius of the constitutions under which we live. It is a property of the course of divine Providence, that there can be no temporal mercy of Heaven, without the attendant danger of its being abused by us, to our moral loss ; which should be an admonition to us, in respect to the civil privileges which we enjoy, not to exert them in such a manner, as to add to the mass of inordinate ambition, of fierce contention, and of intemperate revilings, by which we observe the concerns of the commonwealth dishonoured, and her peace occasionally disturbed. If provision for the

public weal must necessarily open a field, on which the worst passions of human nature are to display themselves in all their enormity and outrage, let them be exclusively characteristic of those who live professedly without God in the world ; being as much lost to the forms of piety as they are strangers to its spirit. Then will they of a contrary character, in the more reasonable exercise of privilege, hold out a standing protest against the licentiousness which irreligion begets and fosters ; while there will also thus be moderated the unhappy effects resulting from it. And if, under this call to an holy care, lying on all professors of Christianity, differing as they do in the forms of their profession, it should appear of our church in particular, that her sons, in proportion to their subjection to the duties of devotion which she enjoins on them, are also observant of the duties, of which the objects are, the peace of society, the safety of the state, and the faithful administration of law and justice ; there will result from it no inconsiderable presumption, that their principles bear on themselves the evidences of having had their origin in Divine illumination.

If, in your several relative situations of a civil nature, there be a demand for the forbearance and the charity which have been recommended, how much more evidently are the same exacted by your respective standings in the church of God ; which was founded on a new law of love ; and of which one of the most illustrious properties is the “ keeping of the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace !” In this line, also, we blame no man for maintaining his just claims, or for expressing his opinions on subjects which are within its sphere. But we blame him, if, in the exercise of these his rights, he break loose from the restraints of the wisdom from above ; of which we are told that it is “ first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated.” When in the line of right, and even in that of duty, there is so much of

“the wrath of man,” which “worketh not the righteousness of God,” how much more distant should every Christian keep himself from that contentious spirit, which seeks occasion to excite and to foment division; which so conceives of its own privilege to think and speak, as to leave no liberty elsewhere to do the same; and which is impatient of all government, except such as is vested in itself, or which it can over-rule! Be assured, brethren, of the love of strife, wherever it shows its head, that it falls under that censure of holy writ—“This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.” Much more consistent would it be, to deny the existence of the church of Christ, as a social body, divinely instituted, than to imagine it divested of the properties found to belong to society, in all the variety of its forms; and to suppose that in this instance, although in no other, the individual is left to govern himself, and to incommode others, according to his own opinion or caprice.

While we are thus inviting your attention to the duties attached to your church-membership, it may, perhaps, be expected that we should dwell on the magnitude of some objects which require expense. But we waive all particular discussion, at the present, of matters of this sort. It is not, however, that we conceive of reasonable pecuniary contribution, as any other than a Christian duty; in the extent, not only of the provisions essential to public worship, but also of those which make it venerable and comely. And, indeed, it is a duty especially incumbent in a country of increasing population, which, of course, frequently exacts contributions for new houses of worship and new provisions for their support. But we put these things out of view, because of a persuasion in our minds, that the true mean of accomplishing the end, is the possessing of men with an adequate sense of the uses for which such accom-

modations are designed. For if any one feel the weight of the obligations of Christianity on his conscience, and the enlivening influence of its consolations on his hopes, and, at the same time, be sensible how much the welfare of civil society and of families require the restraints on passion, and the incitements to virtue, which the Gospel only can supply, and which nothing but its authenticity can sustain, there will be no danger of his hesitating to give of his substance, according as God, in his bounty, may have bestowed on him. And there is no instance, in which God's protecting and perpetuating of his church has been more conspicuously displayed, than in his thus disposing of his professing people to contribute to her according as her exigencies have required. Yes, brethren, let us, in the rearing of our spiritual fabric, reject the untempered mortar of worldly policy and of passion in every shape which it may put on, and we need not fear the failure of the outward means, by which Christ's kingdom is to be made visible on earth, until it shall exchange its properties in this respect, for those of a better kingdom in the heavens.

Finally; in regard to domestic and personal conduct, we desire to be considered as addressing ourselves to every individual of you in particular, and as admonishing that individual to act under the influence of the Christian name; to remember, that even so far as the good of the church is involved in the conduct of its members, no zeal in her cause, and no apparent services in support of it, can balance the disgrace brought on her by a licentious life; and yet, that the responsibility created by a religious profession towards man, is but an image of the higher responsibility, which it increases towards the King of the whole earth; who, in the sentence which he will at last pronounce on the barren and false professor, may well say, with a reference to the incon-

sistency between his profession and his practice—"Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant."

But we do not dwell on dissuasives from immoralities, which are a disgrace to Christianity, when there is before us the more pleasing duty of inciting you to the graces and to the works by which it may be adorned. It is by the being faithful and affectionate in the relations of husband and wife; the being kind and provident on one hand, and dutiful and grateful on the other, in those of parent and child; and the being in the exercise of justice and of mercy from masters to their servants, and of fidelity and obedience from these to them, it is further, by righteous and equitable dealings in all those intercourses with our fellow men, in which there are so many temptations of rapacity impelling to wrong, and so much influence of self to seduce to it under the appearance of right; in addition to these things, it is by the being liberal to the poor, in contributing a full proportion to the tax laid by Providence on those who have, in favour of those who want, for the relief of misery in all the variety of its forms; and finally, it is by the government of the appetites, those foes of the household, which, unless subdued by religion's all-conquering power, breed conflict within, and very often, impatient of the restraints of considerations from any other source, break forth into deeds of disorder and big with temporal ruin; it is, brethren, by such a discipline in all its branches, that there must be felt the energy of a religion, which is described to us as "the power of God unto salvation."

But, brethren, the only way in which that power can be effectual, is in holiness of heart, under the operation of the divine Spirit, known no otherwise than by the precious fruits which it produces. Independently on the grace of God, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, our desires and our pursuits, besides being productive of guilt and misery

in their progress, look no further than to the objects of the present world; the very shadow of which is daily passing away from us. Whatever elevates our minds with an hope full of immortality, much more, whatever prepares us for it by transforming us to the image of him who is "the pattern of all goodness, and righteousness, and truth," can come from nothing else, as we are assured in Scripture, than from his own holy influence, which must be cultivated by devotion, and carried into effect by a continual "pressing forward to the mark for the prize of our high calling."

That this grace, freely bestowed on all, may be improved by all, to our comfort in the present life, and to the consummation of our happiness in Heaven, is the fervent prayer of those who fill the episcopacy of this Church. And, with this assurance, we commend ourselves to the prayers of all her members.

Signed by order of the House of Bishops, in General Convention, at Baltimore, May 23, 1808.

WILLIAM WHITE, Presiding Bishop.

Attested by

JAMES WHITEHEAD, Secretary.

PASTORAL LETTER No. II.

FROM THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH, ASSEMBLED IN GENERAL CONVENTION, AT NEW HAVEN, MAY A. D. 1811.

BRETHREN,

BEING assembled in general convention of our church, we embrace the opportunity of once more inviting your attention to her concerns.

In our former address, we held up to your view the leading principles of our communion in doctrine, discipline and worship; exhorting to a steady maintenance of the profession of them; and, above all, to a manifesting of their holy influence on practice. Whatever weight may be supposed to have attached to the important considerations then urged, we refer to the subjects, in order to continue and perpetuate any salutary impression which may have been made by them. But not going again over the ground of the same topics, we shall at this time confine our attention to some matters, which especially produce an intercourse between us, and both our clerical and lay brethren, within the department of the episcopacy.

The first matter which we have to mention—and this we address exclusively to the clergy—is the duty lying on them, of making to their respective Bishops, and where

there are no Bishops, to the different standing committees, reports on the subjects specified by the 45th canon, thus qualifying the conventions in the different states, to make the reports exacted of them by the same canon, to the general convention. The imperfection of the latter description of reports, manifests too clearly the inattention in some places to the requisition, and defeats in a great measure the design of it. If the object should be thought by any unimportant, we do not hesitate to express our belief, that a continued series of the documents demanded gives more aid, towards forming a judgment of the progress or the decline of religion in different places, than some species of accounts which might be given with the like intent; but which would be affected by a temporary interest taken in religion, and not producing any permanent effects. What occasions the default here complained of to be the more lamented by us, is the cause which it gives to apprehend, that there are not everywhere kept records of the transactions, of which the returns are to be made. The keeping of those records is exacted of the clergy independently of the objects of the canon referred to; and is occasionally of so much consequence to the fortunes, and in some instances, to the reputation of individuals, that we do not know how any clergyman negligent in this particular, can answer for it to God and to society. But even if he be punctual in the discharge of this part of his duty, he ought to suppose, that if his Bishop and his other brethren interest themselves in the success of the preaching of the Gospel, they will wish to know, and it is reasonable they should know, what is the state of it within his cure.

The next subject on which we address you, is the preparing and the presenting of young persons and others, for the holy rite of confirmation. It is matter of grief to us, although we trust it is sufficiently accounted for by the

extent of our dioceses, and by our known engagements, that this apostolic ordinance cannot be carried, under present circumstances, to all the churches under our respective superintendence. In regard to those within our reach, it has not been unobserved by us, how zealous and how successful some of the clergy have been, in aiding our efforts in this branch of the episcopacy ; and even in soliciting our visits to their respective churches, with a view to it. And if the same cannot be affirmed of all our reverend brethren, we are aware that, in some instances, it may have been less owing to indifference and neglect than to the difficulty of introducing a practice, which, until within these few years, was unknown in this country, however in itself coeval with our holy religion. Although the source from which it has descended to us, as a mean of grace, appears to our minds a sufficient reason for the upholding of it, yet our desire of this is much increased, by remarking its practical utility ; in designating a time when it becomes especially proper to call the attention of young persons advancing to maturity, to a weight of obligation which lies on them, independently of any act of theirs ; but the pressure of which they are the more likely to feel in succeeding life, in consequence of their assenting to promises which had been before made by others in their names.

We combine with this, its kindred and instrumental subject of catechetical instruction ; addressing what is to be said concerning it, as well to those who have not, as to those of the clergy who have the opportunity of presenting the members of their congregations for confirmation. We think it no small branch of the utility of this rite, that it gives additional calls to a species of instruction which is very important, but in danger of being neglected. For while what are known under the name of sermons have, at their command, a great variety of matter, calculated to display

any talents possessed by the preacher, and to gratify the curiosity of the hearers, there is nothing of this in the humble office of catechetical instruction; in which he who gives it must be content to repeat the same truths over and over, in the same or nearly the same form; accommodating himself to that saying of the prophet Isaiah—"Line upon line and precept upon precept." And yet observation may abundantly convince any one, how much this is wanted by very many; who, although intelligent and informed in other matters, are incompetent to the giving of a statement of the evidences, either of the Christian religion generally, or of the doctrines of it as professed by the church in which they have been born and educated. Were we suspicious in regard to the soundness of her principles, we should be less solicitous in this matter. But believing them to be evangelical and rational, we wish that there may be more generally invited to them, the attention of those, who do not esteem themselves too wise to receive instruction in this line. It cannot but occur, that in the discharge of such duty, it is desirable there should be shown the reasons of the decisions of our church, on points concerning which we differ from other bodies of professing Christians. But in saying this, we should be misunderstood, if supposed to wish the duty performed in the spirit of uncharitableness. The greatest possible distance from this we hold to be consistent with the most determined attachment to what we receive as truths delivered to us by the divine author of our religion, and his apostles; and with a temperate zeal to defend and to recommend them.

It is evident of the duty here stated as lying on the clergy, that it implies a correspondent duty to lie on our brethren of the laity, to aid this very powerful mean of giving religious instruction, and of impressing religious truth. The least that can be expected of heads of families,

is to send the younger and the less informed members of them to profit by any opportunities of this sort which may be offered. But they have it in their power to do much more, by adding the sanction of their authority and their persuasion, to whatever may be usefully delivered. And here we cannot lose the opportunity of making the remark, that it tends strongly to show the importance of “adorning the Gospel of our God and Saviour in all things;” when it is considered that those heads of families who are notoriously deficient in the performance of their religious duties, however their judgments may approve of sending those dependent on them to opportunities of instruction, naturally indulge indisposition to a duty, in complying with which, they cannot but feel the sting of censure on themselves.

We further address both our clerical and our lay brethren, on the subject of the recommendation of candidates for holy orders. As our canons now stand, the recommendations come to us through the medium of committees in the different states who must be previously satisfied, either from personal knowledge, or by documents laid before them. Although we have too many opportunities of knowing, that a considerable portion of the community are easily brought to testify what is not within their knowledge, and even what is contrary to it; yet we have no reason to doubt of the discrimination made by the committees, as to the characters on whom they place reliance. But what we have to recommend to their particular attention on this point, is the responsibility attached to the circumstance, that they think the person recommended fit to be admitted to the order for which he is a candidate. It is evident that their opinion thus expressed ought to rest on rational ground; and that to constitute this, the party’s being unimpeached as to his moral character, and his being possessed of a reasonable stock of learning are not sufficient. In addition to these qualifications,

his habits should evidence a spirit of piety, a disposition to the exercises of devotion, and zeal for the extending of the influence of religious truth and duty. The want of these properties of character, is radical unfitness; and, therefore, what we recommend to influential members of our communion, and especially to our clerical brethren, is, that they avail themselves of opportunities to discourse with candidates for the ministry, on the qualifications of inward character suited to it; and particularly as described in the promises exacted by the services of ordination. In this way, it is possible to accomplish, in a degree at least, the object aimed at by those who advocate the making of the movements of the party's mind a subject of formal inquiry in his examination. It is well known, that our church carefully avoids every thing of this sort; as not answering its professed end, but producing unintended evils. It does not follow, that she lays little stress, or rather, that she does not lay the greatest stress of all, on the influence of Divine grace over the heart. And, therefore, where this is wanting, it will be a deserving well of the church, and even of the party, to suggest to him reflections which shall have a tendency to induce him to reconsider and finally relinquish his rash design, of engaging in a work to which he is not truly called, however he may declare his thinking that he is so, before God and the church, as is required of him in the service.

It will not be foreign to the subject, if we entreat our brethren of the clergy to bestow pains, as opportunity may serve, in attention to the course of reading of candidates for the ministry, and in advising them concerning it; so as the more to secure their preparation. Our church is not possessed of any public provisions, which will enable learned divines to devote themselves to this department of instruction. We conceive, however, that when a good foundation

has been laid in the learned languages, and in general science, this deficiency may be, in a great measure, supplied by well qualified ministers, in their respective cures: and we invite their attention to the subject, from our earnest desire of recommending and of doing whatever promises to aid in the securing of a learned ministry. We are aware that as St. Paul compared even miraculous endowments without charity, to “sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal,” the same may be said, with still more evident propriety, of all possible learning, as well in theology as in philosophy, without that grace of God which alone can render them subservient to his glory. On the other hand, the effects of manifest literary deficiency in a clergyman, are too obvious to be overlooked. It tends to drive some of the intelligent and well-informed members of our church to other societies, who may be more attentive to the qualifications for the ministry in this respect; and to detach others from all religious profession; which tends to the increase of religion and infidelity. Even persons who may be but imperfectly qualified to judge of the attainments of their ministers, become alienated from them by their reputation for insufficiency.

We avail ourselves of this opportunity, to make a solemn call on both clergy and laity, to put in our power, as circumstances may enable, to carry into effect the official authority vested in us, for the relieving of our church from the scandal of any minister—if there be any such—who may dishonour his calling by an immoral, or an irreligious life and conversation. Wherever the evil may exist, the canons are competent to “the putting away from ourselves of that wicked person.” We are far from the wish of becoming ourselves, or of encouraging others to become inquisitors; and much less of hazarding the being false accusers. But where reports are confident, and said to be sustained by facts;

as, on the one hand, justice both to the church and to the individual requires the purging of character from infamy ; so, on the other hand, there is no consideration conducing to the success of the Gospel ministry, which does not loudly call for the cutting off from it of every minister, whose evil manners counteract its very design. And we do not hesitate to say, that those of his brethren who do not discountenance his irregularities, counteract by such indifference, in their private deportment, the effect of any instructions and exhortations which they may deliver from the pulpit. It is to little purpose, that an offender is severed from a congregation, if he be sent to dishonour the communion elsewhere. Its not being done canonically, and as an effective removal from the ministry itself, is one of the impediments to the establishing of a consistent system of discipline. We are persuaded, that for the sustaining of a competent ministry, every member of it, when entrusted with the pastoral charge of a congregation by their voluntary act, ought to have security for permanency in his station ; until removed, after a fair trial, for some error in religion or for some viciousness of life. But how far the winking at an evil liver, by those who are especially looked to for the taking of measures towards the removing of him, tends to the doing of this in a way, which might be beneficial if it were sure to light on unworthy persons only, but which may be a precedent leaving to a good man no security for his reputation ; is worthy of being considered by all those who have at heart the well-governing of our communion.

Considering the description of subjects on which we are now addressing you, it would be an omission not to entreat you to aid us in our endeavours to carry into effect the canons of our church generally, and especially the provisions made for the using of her services agreeably to the rubrics. And although this is a matter which belongs

more immediately to the clergy; yet we think it not unworthy of the laity to discountenance deviations, if made by any minister in contrariety to his solemn promises at ordination. We, ourselves, are not only under a common weight of obligation with all the clergy, but make an especial promise at our consecration, of "conformity and obedience to the doctrine, discipline and worship" of our church. Now one part of the discipline is the looking to the maintenance of order by others, in those three departments. We have been sensibly affected by some instances of the breach of promises made to us, under solemn appeals to God, and invocations of the testimony of his church. We should hold ourselves wanting to our subject, if we were not now to declare our disappointment, and to invite to the irregularity the disapprobation of all persons, who entertain a sense of the obligations of integrity and truth. We do this the more readily, as there have not been wanting occasions, when displeasure has been manifested in the premises with good effect, by judicious lay members of congregations, on which the irregularities have been obtruded.

We have one more subject to bring before you: and it is the propriety of taking measures, towards all reasonable security, for the perpetuating of the episcopacy. It is well known, under what inconvenience our church laboured from the want of it, while these states were dependent colonies. It would be extremely unpleasant, to be under the necessity of having recourse again to the episcopacy of our mother church. Neither do we know what civil considerations might interfere, to impede reiterated recourse of this description. The decease of several of our right reverend brethren, the disability of others of them from indisposition, and the advanced years of those who survive and are in health, induce the present call on you; which is to increase our

number, so far as it can be done with propriety, and particularly with entire satisfaction as to the persons to be chosen. We wish not to lessen your responsibility in this point. But that being supposed to be regarded by both you and us, we take the liberty of holding out to you the importance of the object, and to appeal to your own sense of the expediency of what we propose. The attendance of but two bishops on this and at the last convention, and the unavoidable causes preventing the attendance of others of our right reverend brethren, afford too strong a proof of the propriety of what we now suggest. For although two of our reverend brethren have been recently chosen to the episcopacy; and rejoicing in this event, we intend, God willing, to proceed to their consecration very soon after the rising of this convention; yet we shall not consider the addition of them to our body, as sufficient for the exigency, or as affording the measure of security which the case requires.

Finally, brethren, we assure you of our prayers, and invite yours, that this and every other measure, designed for the glory of God and the good of his church, may be blessed by him to that end.

Signed by order of the House of Bishops.

WILLIAM WHITE, Presiding Bishop.

New Haven, May 1811.

PASTORAL LETTER No. III.

FROM THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH, ASSEMBLED IN GENERAL CONVENTION, AT PHILADELPHIA, MAY A. D. 1814.

BRETHREN,

In the general convention, held in the city of New York, in the year 1804, it was provided, that there should be a pastoral address from the house of Bishops of this church, to the clergy and laity of the same, on such matters as might be thought the most pertinent to the state of the church at each particular period, and grounded on the documents which, on every such occasion, might appear in the official reports from the various sections of the Union. In compliance with this provision, the Bishops assembled in general convention in the city of Baltimore, in the year 1808, addressed all orders of persons within our communion, on the topics of doctrine, worship, discipline, and a Christian life and conversation. During the next general convention, which was held in the city of New Haven, in the year 1811, the Bishops there and then assembled, issued their second pastoral letter, which related to sundry particulars, especially interesting to themselves in their ecclesiastical administrations. Although any of the matters discussed on these occasions, might be now profitably recurred to, as

having not been before exhausted ; yet we rather feel a desire to set before you some circumstances in the state of our church, which we consider as fruitful of encouragement, and some other circumstances, which open to our prospect an extensive field of zealous labour ; and, on the review of these two subjects, to ground some heads of advice and exhortation, deemed by us worthy of being presented at this time to the members of our church in general, and to the clergy in particular.

One branch of the encouragement referred to is the visible decline of infidelity, and the growing disrepute attaching to activity in its cause. It is within the memory of most of the present generation, when that destroyer of human happiness broke in like a flood on civilized society, as well in the new as in the old world, threatening destruction to all its best interests ; although with the boast of introducing a new era, relieved from prejudices of former times, and embellished by improvements not heard of before, in public policy and in private morals. In this threatened revolution, there was nothing new in the line of argument : so that the defenders of the Christian revelation had need of no other than the old stores of answers to objections, which had been made at different times, during the lapse of ages. Whatever there was of novelty in the event, arose from an extraordinary combination of circumstances in the political concerns of nations ; which produced an imaginary alliance between projected improvements in civil policy, and the eradicating of religion under the name of superstition ; whereby, whatever was corrupt or unreasonable in the former line, was supposed to be upheld. Under gigantic struggles for the reformation of political abuses, there rose into notice and into power a species of philosophy, which proclaimed war with religion generally, and with Christianity in particular ; and very extensive were the ravages

which happened in consequence, in every line wherein human happiness, either temporal or spiritual, is concerned. The issue which we hold out as a subject of congratulation, although not without painful sensibilities on account of intermediate mischief, is an opening of the public mind to the shallowness of the pretences, by which so many have been deceived and demoralized. It is more and more confessed, that religion enters essentially into all the interests of individuals, of families, and of states: and while some are induced, on that account, to encourage it with a view to public order and private morals, and for the promoting of the temporal prosperity of the social body, doubtless, a prevailing sentiment of this effect must lead others to contemplate the important subject, as it manifests a bearing on the interests which will remain, when the present state of things shall be forever at an end. For when we suffer ourselves to proceed in the correct reasoning, which ascends from what we observe and know, to causes competent to the producing of it, we cannot but perceive, that the benefits resulting from the due exercise of the religious principle, are evidence of its being given by the great Author of nature, for the government of the human mind. The consequence is undeniable; unless on the pretence, that in the contrivance of the present system, its order and its continuance have been provided for by a salutary deception; which yet has not been so ingeniously contrived, as to escape detection by the discernment of those, who cherish a sentiment so foolish and so profane.

This leads us to remark another article of encouragement, tending more immediately to the same blessed end. We mean an increased attendance on the duties of public worship, and an increasing desire to provide the means of sustaining and continuing it, over a considerable proportion of the territory of these states. While we ascribe this

partly to the detection of the insidious pretensions of infidelity, we cannot but have our eyes open to the fact, that from whatever secondary cause it may happen, there are seasons of religious sensibility, wherein it is more easy than under ordinary circumstances, to call the attention of the people to the things which belong to their everlasting peace. It is for the purpose of improving an opportunity of this description, that the remark is made : and accordingly we invite all serious persons of our communion, and especially the ministers of the Gospel, to avail themselves of existing circumstances, for the sowing of the seed of Gospel doctrine; under the hope, that through the influences of the Holy Spirit of God, it will bear fruit, thirty, sixty and an hundred fold. A considerable addition to the number of our houses of public worship, a growing measure of attendance in them, an extending demand for the Holy Bible, and for books on subjects of Christian doctrine tending immediately to practice, and, we hope there may be added, greater liberality for the supply of the wants of those who seclude themselves from all lucrative employment, that they may devote themselves to the ministry; are among the favourable appearances on the ground of which we indulge ourselves in the prospects here intimated. We are aware how easily there may take place counterfeit revivals of religion, and how often it has happened in different times and places. There are now alluded to, what has been the effect of violent agitations of the passions, suddenly excited and soon subsiding. We neither aim nor rejoice at such revivals; perceiving nothing like them either in the word of God, or in the history of the primitive church; nor any thing favouring them in the institutions of our own. Accordingly, when we refer to a growing attention to religion, we mean of that cast which is agreeable to truth and soberness, and congenial with the known devotions of our church.

While we thus define the religious profession which we are desirous of perpetuating, we do not set up any institutions as conceiving them to be acceptable to God, any further than as the outward form may be expressive of an inward power. But we do not aim at revivals of religion, in a departure from the principles of Christian worship, which we believe to have descended to us from Jesus Christ and his apostles, through the channel of the primitive church and of the Church of England. On this ground, when we rejoice at what we conceive to be observable within our communion, of an increased interest in religious inquiries and attention to religious duties, we mean to be understood as speaking of these within the bounds which have been defined.

Having alluded, under the preceding head, to some extravagancies interfering with the spirit of the worship of this church, which, in some districts of country, wherein there was the want of an intelligent and zealous ministry, have withdrawn many from her communion; it is with great satisfaction that we go on to remark, as another cause of congratulation, a decrease of the disorder. In various vicinities of the United States, wherein our communion was formerly numerous and respectable—for we speak of the subject, only as it has a bearing on our own religious interests—there has been a visible decline of the effects of a species of zeal, covering itself with the character of our church, although not in harmony with her institutions, and no longer continuing to wear her name, than until circumstances sustained it in secession, and often in undisguised hostility. We are not at a loss to discover some of the causes of this inroad, existing within ourselves.—And although we plead, that it was partly owing to a cessation of public ministry, in consequence of events brought about by the providence of God; yet, if any should lay a share of the

blame on the want of godly and rational zeal, or a holy life and conversation in some of our clergy, we wish to humble ourselves under the charge, and to call on all our brethren of the clergy to do the same, as a body, in proportion as it may be just; and each individual on his own account, who may be conscious of having given occasion, in any degree, to the resulting evil.

Whatever may have been the cause of it, we are persuaded of the fact, that it is on the decline. We know that there are many who feel the loss of the substantial nourishment of doctrine which they had abandoned; and who testify that they have not found in other quarters the satisfaction which they had expected. We anticipate the growth of the sentiment, in proportion as, under the Divine blessing, we can send qualified and faithful labourers into the vineyard. We deplore, as a lessening of the prospect of this, every instance in which there may have intruded into our ministry, any person destitute of zeal for the work, or any one, who may have adopted the scheme of checking extravagancies extraneous to our communion, by introducing the like to them within her pale: conduct which we expect to see checked, by its being found to be an expedient for the obtaining of popularity, not commonly attended by permanent success; and always contrary to a good conscience.

While we invite our whole communion to rejoice with us in the sources of satisfaction which have been disclosed, the use to which we desire to apply the consideration of them, is an increase of Gospel zeal and labour, by providing in all places the means of grace, where they are wanting or imperfectly enjoyed, and by exciting, in the imperfect sense in which such an object can be said to be accomplished by human measures, the spirit of religion; in the exercises of a rational piety, and in a suitable life and con-

versation. In our endeavours for the accomplishing of this, there opens to our view a very extensive field, wherein we consider the following particulars as especially worthy of observation.

Within these few years, and within the bounds of this combined commonwealth, there have risen into existence sovereign states, with a numerous and increasing population, but without a proportionate provision for the ministry of the Gospel; and this, perhaps, the most of all, in regard to those of the inhabitants who profess our principles in doctrine, worship and discipline. The condition of our professing members within those states, has been a subject of our most serious concern; and the pressure of the exigency seems to be, in a great measure, owing to the want of exertion, for the centering of the means within the power of the persons principally concerned. Among the expedients which have been proposed for the bettering of our prospects in the western states, there has been that of extending the episcopacy to those regions. At the time of the last general convention, this came with all the weight of its importance, under the consideration of the only two bishops then assembled. They expressed their wishes to the effect, and gave a beginning to measures, of which it was hoped, and is still hoped, that they will issue in the accomplishment of the design; although, besides the general difficulty of the object, it has been hindered by events not then foreseen.

As there are thus whole states recently risen, without any or with very little provision for the support of our religious profession, so in the older states, there are large districts equally destitute, and containing members of our communion, who are as much cut off from all intercourse with us, as if they lived in the other hemisphere. In the former emigrations from Europe into this new world,

there seems to have been a circumstance in the condition of those of our communion, which distinguished them in many instances from other emigrants, and eventually added much to that scattered population of the former, which we are here pointing out as the cause of a difficulty meeting us, in our exertions for the sustaining of the existence of our communion. It was not uncommon, for a body of settlers to be bound closely together, either by a foreign language, or by some peculiarity of religious opinion, labouring under discouragement in the land of their nativity. To such persons, it was an obvious dictate of prudence, to form compact settlements in the land chosen by them, to be in future the country of themselves and their posterity. The case was otherwise with the emigrants of the Church of England; who, being without such especial ties, were the easier induced to make their settlements according to each family's separate interest and convenience. As a counterbalance to this, so far as their religious profession was concerned, it was natural to look for encouragement to the church in the parent country. This was indeed extended to them, until the change of the relative situations of the countries, in civil matters, produced such a severance of them in religious discipline, as rendered pecuniary aid either impracticable or inexpedient. The fact above stated, is at least one of the causes of the dispersed settlements of the members of our communion, in districts wherein the mass of population has risen under the influence of principles, and, in some instances, of languages different from ours. From members of our communion of this description, there continually reaches our ears some such incitement as that heard by St. Paul in a vision, from the men of Macedonia—"Come and help us." While our means in their behalf are limited, we cannot excuse ourselves from presenting them to the

members of our church in general, as fit objects of Gospel care and labour.

Even in our settled congregations—some of them of long standing—there occasionally occurs so much indifference to the sustaining of even the profession of religion, and the making of provision for the administration of its ordinances, as that while their neglect renders them subjects of censure, it ought also to be an excitement of our zeal. Even in such congregations, there are always at least a few persons who are ready to “strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die.” And even if there were none such, those of the contrary stamp are not out of the reach of that voice of the Gospel, which is raised, “not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” We have the satisfaction of knowing, that the call has been made with great effect, even in congregations of the description which has been stated. And this, we hope, will serve as encouragement to those who are ready to do their part of the work of God, leaving the issue of their labour to the influences of his Holy Spirit.

It ought further to be taken into view, that even in neighbourhoods wherein provision is made for the exercise of the ministry, and congregations are duly organized, according to the venerable institutions of the church, there are powerful incitements to zeal and labour, that we may call sinners to repentance; that we may direct the attention of professors beyond the forms, to the power of godliness; that we guard the imperfectly informed against the errors engrafted by the weakness of men on the holy stock of Christian doctrine; that we may open all the branches of of this in their integrity, as found in the word of truth; and that we may urge persons of all descriptions, to the attainment and the practice of whatever may contribute to the adorning of the doctrine of our God and Saviour. It

is not here forgotten, that for the accomplishing of these blessed ends, "although Paul plant and Apollos water," it is "God alone who giveth the increase." But he sees fit, as well in the influences of his grace as in the dealings of his providence, to produce his high ends by the instrumentality of human means. And in each of these departments, the duties of all of us are discernible, from the relations and from the circumstances in which we severally stand.

While we thus hold out, to all the members of our communion, the Gospel work which we conceive to be laid on them by the Divine Author of our religion, we are not backward to extend their attention to some articles of advice and exhortation, which we think especially worthy of notice, for the accomplishing of the ends which we have in view.

The first, and as essential to all the rest, is mutual incitement to the work; and this in the Christian spirit which alone can either render it an object worthy of considerable exertion, or claim the promise of Divine support. We read in one of the Prophets, that when a general reformation was in prospect, "they who feared the Lord, spake often one to another," it being evidently meant in mutual incitement, to the object of their common concern. The religion of the Scriptures is eminently social: and whatever relates to the visible profession of it must be effected by joint exertions. Yet we mean not by this, that any concurrence is solicited, without a sense of religion on the consciences, and real piety in the affections of the agents. For we are free to declare our opinion, that the encouraging of active endeavours, prompted by any other motives than a religious state of mind, is that building with untempered mortar, to which there is not likely to be attached duration—much less usefulness and beauty.

We consider, as a necessary expedient for the perpetuating and for the increasing of our church, that reasonable provision be made for the ministers, in proportion to the means of the people in their respective parishes. There is not here forgotten the delicacy of the subject, nor the misconstruction liable to be put on whatever is said concerning it, coming from men who are themselves of the body to which the discourse applies. But while this is a consideration, prescribing the limits of moderation on our zeal for the matter recommended, it does not cause us to be silent on what we perceive to be a dictate of religious obligation. Were we restrained, by a mistaken delicacy, from the delivery of our sentiments, we should find ourselves reproved by that of St. Paul to the Galatians—"Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap:" words which the connection shows to apply to the wants of those who labour in the Gospel. There can be no argument adduced to prove the divine institution of the ministry, which does not also prove that ministers, received on the choice of the people, and for their service, renouncing all secular means of maintenance, ought, on the most obvious principles of justice, to be furnished with whatever is essential to their sustenance and their comfort. While there is, in theory, a general conviction of this pervading our communion, and while the principle is acted on in some places, to a reasonable extent, there are others, wherein there has been lamentable deficiency in the discharge of pecuniary engagements. This is a hardship which affects our own characters, in a point of great delicacy and difficulty. For, being pressed from various vicinities within our respective dioceses, for the supplying of a resident ministry; in addition to the distress which we generally feel on account of the want of opportunities of meeting the demand, there is often the additional embar-

rassment, when opportunities occur, that we may be the authors both of loss and vexation to worthy men, by encouraging them to trust to promises which will not be fulfilled.

The comparatively small number of our clergy induces us to recommend to destitute congregations, especially to those whose number is such as renders the speedy settlement of an ordained minister improbable, to avail themselves of the services of a lay reader; where such a person, respectable in character, and sufficient in other respects, takes so much interest in religion, as to be willing to read, on Sundays, those parts of the liturgy which are not appropriate to ordained ministers, and such printed discourses as may be judged to be adapted to the understandings and the circumstances of the people. It will be no difficult matter, under the superintendence of the proper ecclesiastical authority, to select such discourses from the many able works of divines, which have been given to the public from the press. We hold this to be a laudable effort of Christian zeal. Nevertheless, as like every other expedient of the same description, it is liable to abuse; we would hold up to view the provisions of the 19th canon, in regard to the selection of the sermons to be read. Neither will it be foreign to the purpose, to allude to what the same canon provides, when, in relation to readers having a view to the ministry, it forbids not only the use of such parts of the service as are appropriate to it, but also some matters of little importance in themselves; yet tending to mislead the world, as to the claims of the agents to an official character, which is not yet, and perhaps may not hereafter be conferred.

Another mean to be recommended, is encouragement and pecuniary aid, where necessary and practicable, to young men of known piety and virtue, and of promising qualifica-

tions in other respects, in their preparing of themselves for the ministry. An apostle has said, "How shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?" What was the nature of the sending contemplated by him, is sufficiently evident in the plan on which, in person, he sent labourers into the vineyard. And if it was comprehended in the counsels of Divine wisdom, to extend Christianity to heathen countries, through the medium of a preached Gospel, the same must be the mean of its continuance, in the countries in which it has been heretofore received. If so, pious motions to such a ministry, ought to be a motive to the extending of aid for the supply of the necessary acquirements, in a church which entertains the opinion, and contends for it as of vast importance to the cause of Christianity in general, that her ministers should be furnished with all those branches of literature, which are necessary to the sustaining of the truth of Scripture against the assaults of infidelity, and the errors of mistaken professors of Christianity. Besides pecuniary aid, there is another species of it to which we invite. It is to be expected from the clergy in particular, and consists in assisting students in their progress, by suitable instruction and advice. It is with pleasure we add, that this benevolence has been extended, in some instances, to the great profit of the church; which we mention under the hope, that there will be an increase in the opportunities of the benefit, and in ability and readiness for the extension of it.

But while we would thus expedite the means of accession to the ministry, we would be far from pressing the subject in such a manner, as may incite to the forwarding of the expectations of any persons, concerning whom it may afterwards appear, that due attention would have shown them to be very unlikely to be either useful or respectable. Our stations have familiarized us to two great dangers, on the

present subject. One is, that the desire of being engaged in the sacred function occupies some persons, concerning whom there are manifest evidences on the one hand of sincere piety, and on the other of such imbecility as will not suffer us to believe that they are within the meaning of that qualification of our ordination service, "the being called by the Holy Ghost to this office and ministry." The other case, is that of persons who fancy the clerical profession; sometimes from vanity in the display of talents real or imaginary, while their characters and their conversations may show, that they have not an adequate apprehension, either of the contemplated character, or of the temper of mind with which it should be engaged in. However sensible of the disadvantage of the paucity of our clergy, we do not wish to add to their number, by either of these descriptions of persons. On the contrary, we consider the discouraging of them as a meritorious act, in any members of our church who have opportunities to that effect.

Increased exertion for the building of churches, and to keep in decent order those heretofore erected, is another matter to be recommended. In a country so much advancing as ours in population, it is evident, that a very great proportion of the people must be without the benefit of social worship; unless there be a proportionate addition of houses, in which it is to be offered. We appeal to it as an incontrovertible fact, that in general, of the mass of society, in the portion of it who become lost to this great mean of whatever is estimable in every department of social life, there ensues manifest evidence of depravity in their conversation and in their manners. Here is a canker in the body, which cannot fail to spread, unless it be subdued by active efforts, for the putting of the means of public worship within the power of all. In this debt to the public welfare, have not we a share? Have we not also a like debt to the

church of which we call ourselves members? Certain it is that very many have left the membership of it, because they and their families could not enjoy the means of grace within its pale. It is not improbable, that from the same cause, many have been lost to the Christian profession, in whatever shape. The keeping of churches in decent repair, is so manifest a dictate of propriety, that we should not have mentioned it, were not the fact known to us, that in some places, there is delinquency in this matter, to the dishonour of those to whom it is to be ascribed : since in the vicinity of such neglect, there is scarcely a passing stranger, who can forbear to remark severely on the indifference or the parsimony which is the cause of it.

While the subject now before us is contemplated as leading to expense, we wish to define the limits of it. There is reason to believe, that in some instances, there has been discouragement of the design of erecting a house of worship to Almighty God, because the agents in it could not compass the means of gratifying a taste for magnificence and expensive ornament. We do not think with those who would interdict the fine arts from this department. On the contrary, we are of opinion, that where wealth abounds, and where it can be bestowed on this object, without interfering with any other more imperious ; and while it carries with it the incidental benefit, of giving employment to industrious tradesmen and subsistence to their families ; it may be not only innocently, but even laudably thus bestowed. But under the insufficiency for the erecting of splendid churches, we consider the affecting of them as evidence of too weak an influence of the principle, which should govern in accomplishing such objects ; and we know that it has had a mischievous tendency, in the frustrating of some efforts and in the discouraging of others.

Associations, in those vicinities wherein the number and

the ability of our people are competent to the sending of occasional aid to our more scattered and less wealthy population, we hold to be a judicious mean of building up our church ; and not unreasonably claimed of any members of that mystical body, concerning which we are taught, that if one member suffer, all the members should suffer with it. The expedient recommended has been adopted in some states, and has already produced such fruits, as encourage us in pronouncing it to be an object eminently worthy of Christian care and exertion.

Another article of our recommendation, is the distribution of Bibles, of the books of Common Prayer, and of a few tracts on the principal articles of Christian faith, as held by our church. The benefit of such a measure may be contemplated, as it respects places where no provision exists for Divine worship, and others where this benefit is enjoyed. As to the former, without disparaging the divinely instituted ministry, we may be assured, that even where Providence has not bestowed this mean of grace, the Gospel, derived immediately from the sacred records, will often be found “the power of God unto salvation.” In the latter instance, there will always be a proportion of the people, whose indigent circumstances call for pecuniary aid in a variety of ways ; and surely among the means of their relief, no call can be more pressing than that which invites to the reaching out to them of the bread of life.

While we are on this part of the subject, we avail ourselves of the opportunity of congratulating all the members of our church, on what we conceive to be eminently a cause of joy to the Christian world in general—the wonderful efforts which have been made within these few years, being begun principally by members of the parent church, by a body known under the name of the British and Foreign

Bible Society, imitated in various countries of the old world, and concurred in with alacrity and zeal throughout the extent of the American Union—to disperse the Bible in regions wherein it has been hitherto unknown; and, in those wherein the religion of it is professed, to provide that none shall have reason to complain, of their being necessarily destitute of this instructor, this guide, and this source of the highest consolations. We should conceive of ourselves as wanting on this occasion to the high duties of our stations, were we to neglect to bear our testimony in favour of this energetic effort, for the disappointment of the wicked designs of infidelity, for the extending of the influence of pure and undefiled religion, and finally, for the carrying into effect of those gracious promises of Heaven, which will not have been accomplished, until “the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.”

When we recommended exertions for the more general diffusion of the Book of Common Prayer, it was not from the presumptuous sentiment of ranking any compositions of mere men, with what was indited under the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit. But it was on this double ground; first, that as the order of our service requiring the audible voices of the people in the act of worship, there is peculiar propriety in providing, that no portion of any congregation shall be necessarily debarred from bearing their share, in what we deem essential to “the worshipping in the beauty of holiness:” and principally, because, as John the Baptist taught his disciples how to pray; and as a greater than he gave similar instruction, in an admirable form left on record in the Gospel; in like manner it is expedient, that the public wisdom of the church should furnish her members with a body of devotions, held to be agreeable to the direction of St. Paul, of “worshipping with the understanding:” and yet not inconsistent with that higher princi-

ple of his and our master, of "worshipping in spirit and in truth." And although we do not doubt, that the religious discipline of the heart, in whatever language it may be clothed, rises an acceptable incense to the throne of a gracious and common father; yet, while we contend that public devotions should be such as the most intelligent and cultivated understandings must approve of, we conceive that a body of public devotions, so framed, must have an influence on the retired exercises of individuals; so as to prevent their either sinking into indifference, or running into the excesses of enthusiasm.

In the mention of small tracts, there were understood those which give correct views of any of the doctrines, or any of the duties, applying to all descriptions of persons; and which it is especially desirable to accommodate to those in the less informed departments of society. We know that similar attempts to what is now recommended, have had a powerful influence in propagating opinions, which we believe to be not agreeable to Gospel verity: and this itself is a sufficient call to a counterbalance of the evil, in the proper use of an engine so liable to be misapplied. We have had ample proof of what may be accomplished in this very line, by the success therein of a society in the parent church, known for above a century, and lately acting with a vast increase of energy, under the name of "The Society for the promoting of Christian Knowledge:" which venerable body we cannot take notice of on this occasion, without recommending the tracts published by them, as a storehouse from which there may be drawn the religious armour, competent to the end within our view.

We have touched, although slightly, the various topics contemplated by us in the beginning of this address. It must have been visible of the mass of the remarks comprehended in it, that they apply alike to the clergy and to the lay

members of this church. But we ought not to conclude without an especial call on the former, to be active in the patronizing and in the executing of designs, for the extending of the influence of religion, agreeably to the principles on which alone there can be any acting to that effect, within the bounds of our communion. In a church existing in countries not under the peculiar circumstances of these United States, it must in general happen, that the objects of the concern of a clergyman are within the bounds of the parish of which he is the pastor. Our case is different; and will continue so, while there shall apply to so many members of our communion, that they are "scattered abroad, as sheep which have no shepherd." It would be a mistaken remedy of the evil, to seal up sources of instruction now open, in the uncertain search of opportunities of usefulness, where they are wanting. Yet it is possible, and this is what we recommend, for any minister, within the limits of his especial duties, and without injury to any of them, to favour and to promote designs, by a zeal which extends beyond his more immediate sphere. Even where the efforts of the several individuals may be small, yet combined, they will probably have an effect which shall be extensively, deeply and permanently felt.

The lay members of our communion we exhort, in reference to and for the accomplishment of the objects which have been laid before them, to aid the clergy in their measures; or to propose and pursue measures themselves, to the effect. We disclaim sectarian zeal, in every matter which we propose for the increase of our church. We profess to aim herein at the doing of our part, for the advancement of Christianity; a work of which no share can be undertaken by us except on the ground of the doctrine, the worship and the discipline, which we believe to be the most agreeable to the Scriptures, and to the practice of the

primitive ages of the church. Under the influence of this sentiment, we invite all descriptions of persons contemplated in the present address, to aid us in sustaining and extending a church, "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone:" not forgetting, that in all endeavours to this effect, an essential expedient, and without which we are not likely to be favoured with the Divine blessing, is the "adorning of the doctrine of our God and Saviour in all things."

Signed by order of the House of Bishops,

WILLIAM WHITE, Presiding Bishop.

Philadelphia, May 23, 1814.

PASTORAL LETTER No. IV.

FROM THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH, ASSEMBLED IN GENERAL CONVENTION, AT NEW YORK, MAY A. D. 1817.

BRETHREN,

THE Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church, assembled in convention, in compliance with a duty enjoined on them by the 45th canon, address to you this their Pastoral Letter.

In the review of the documents sent to us by the House of Clerical and Lay Deputies, while we rejoiced over the accounts of the prosperity and the increase of our church in very many parts of the American Union, we could not but mourn over some accounts of an opposite description; attesting the melancholy fact, that from the time of the war of the revolution to the present day, there continue, in many places, a cessation of public worship, and the dereliction of efficient means for the restoring of it. We are aware of many difficulties and discouragements in this business; but we implore those who retain an affection for that church, within which they were brought to an interest in the covenanted mercies of God in Christ, and who value that form of sound words and of profession, which they have inherited from primitive times, through the channel of the

Church of England, to “strengthen the things that remain before” the candlestick be removed out of its place. In making this solemn call, we derive encouragement from an application to the present convention, from the church in the respectable State of North Carolina, to be received as a branch of our church generally throughout the Union. In that state, from the date of the American Revolution, there had been sometimes not a single clergyman of our church within its bounds; and sometimes only one or two of our number, and those not permanently resident. It has been considerably owing to a few clergymen, who have recently settled there from the other states, that there has taken place a revived attention to the ordinances of religion, and an organizing of the communion. We rejoice in the event, and to those clergymen and others who have been prominent on the occasion, we desire to make our affectionate acknowledgments.

There has opened to our view, during the present session, a more ample field in the states on the western waters of this continent. It has been long a source of grief to us, that while the current of population was setting strongly towards those extensive regions, from the Atlantic states, the emigrants of our communion have been in a state of privation of the ordinances of religion, in the forms in which they had been educated, and of which they most approve. We have been the more concerned in this matter from an apprehension, that there has been an indifference to the spiritual interests of those our distant brethren, in the minds of the bishops of this church. For there have not been known our difficulties, from the want of labourers in the harvest, from there being so many places in the elder states, in which the members of our church are also destitute; and from the liberty of choice in every minister admitted to orders among us, who naturally prefers a settlement within

reach of some degree of intercourse with the persons to whose society he has been accustomed, when there is an equal prospect of the usefulness of his labours. It gives rise to some of our most agreeable sensibilities, that this source of misunderstanding, and this estrangement from our connection are likely to be done away. A few clergymen, whom we honour for their late labours, have succeeded in collecting sundry congregations, and are likely to organize the church in sundry states. The affection with which these clergymen have been received, and the readiness with which their proposals have been complied with, are pledges of the disposition of the inhabitants, to the doing of whatever is requisite for the full introducing among them of the means of grace, agreeably to the principles endeared by ancient recollections to them and to ourselves. What has been done in their favour in the present session, will appear in the printed journal. We hope that their wishes, as expressed in their applications to us from various congregations and various individuals, have been met. And we look for the issue, under the blessing of God, to their further exertions in the good work which has been begun.

It has been highly gratifying to us, from the opening of this convention to the present moment, to have before us, not only an increase of the number of our body, giving ground of confidence in the continuance of the succession of the episcopacy; but a more ample representation of our church, in the House of Clerical and Lay Deputies, than has heretofore been witnessed. We wish for a continuance and an increase of this interest in the course of ecclesiastical councils, in the minds of the clerical and of the lay members of our communion: for besides that such occasional assemblies as the present may be instrumental to the building of us up in our most holy faith, and in provoking to love and to good works, they are essential to the encou-

raging and to the continuing of union, in the profession and the practice of what we conceive to be evangelical in doctrine, in worship and in the institution of the ministry. It is only when such bodies become agitated by the angry passions of the persons who compose them, that they are useless to the church: and under the weight of that circumstance, they may even counteract all the uses contemplated by Divine Wisdom in her establishment. The consideration of this creates a call on us to lift up our hearts in gratitude to Almighty God, and in an acknowledgment of its being owing to his grace, that during this convention, now near its close, while, among your bishops there have been scarcely shades of difference of opinion on the various points which have been before them, they are not informed of any such diversity, as can have an operation on the duty of keeping "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

On the perusal of the documents sent to us by the House of Clerical and Lay Deputies, as enjoined by the aforesaid canon, we perceive reason to rejoice on account of the increase of our church; in the forming of new congregations; in the revival of others after a long state of inertness, and the discontinuance of the administration of the ordinances among them; in an additional number of able and faithful ministers, and of hopeful young men in preparation for the ministry; in a better attendance than formerly on public worship, and on the sacraments and other institutions of the church; and, as we hope on the ground of these promising appearances, in the religious and moral improvement of the various descriptions of professors within our pale. There is an unequivocal fact, which disposes us to take a favourable view of the growing influence of religion on the public mind generally. We allude to the vast increase of editions of Bibles, as well those for sale, as those designed for gratuitous distribution, through the medium of the numerous

societies, who, of late years, have associated for the conveying of that invaluable treasure to the houses and the bosoms of the most destitute of the people. Within the bounds of our communion, we perceive an additional fact to the point, in an increased call for our Book of Common Prayer, from all descriptions of persons; and in the extended exertions of societies instituted for the gratuitous distribution of it. This is a help to godliness, in which we should rejoice under any circumstances which might occur: but it is especially so, in the cases of a great proportion of our people; who, on account of the smallness of their numbers, in their respective vicinities, and the want of an ordained ministry, can enjoy no other worship of Almighty God, than that which is of the closet and of the family. That in each of these the Prayer Book is instrumental in cultivating a spirit of devotion, we have had so much evidence, as does not suffer us to entertain a doubt.

It may be presumed to be an object of the 45th canon, that if, in addition to the subjects suggested by the documents presented on the occasion of any general convention, there should be others contemplated as especially worthy of your attention, preference should be given to such as have relation to the present circumstances of the church. To them, however, more than to any others, there attaches the danger of our being understood to be unnecessarily obtruding opinions on points not before us in our respective official characters; accordingly—as may be said—not elucidated by argument; and at the risk of committing our personal reputation and that of the churches in which we respectively preside. Aware of the delicacy of our situation in this particular, we shall be careful not to affirm any positions, besides such as have undisputed existence in our ecclesiastical institutions, or are the obvious dictates of sound discretion.

The subjects to which your attention is now invited, are the relations in which we stand, 1st. To the civil community of our country; and, 2dly. To our fellow Christians of other religious denominations. Concerning both of these, some misapprehensions have been entertained; and it will lie on us to recommend the best expedients for the counteracting of them, by prudent provisions and by Christian conduct among ourselves.

Under the first of the points, what we have immediately in view, is a position which has been propagated in some of the states, or in some portions of them, that the Bishops of the Episcopal Church in America are under the control of the ecclesiastical authority from which her episcopacy was derived. We do not inquire whether the suggestion originated in malice, or in the want of information: although we know, that from the latter cause, and from there not being access to a knowledge of the subject, there have resulted prejudices, which, on inquiry, have been abandoned. A communication of the reproach cast on our church in this matter, was made to the Bishops at the last general convention. On that occasion, they thought it sufficient to enter on the journal, and by that instrument to bring before the public an express contradiction of what had been affirmed. They had afterwards the satisfaction of knowing that the assurance was gratifying to many. But as the reproach referred to has not ceased, and as the circulation of the journal is not extensive, they think it expedient to renew the assurance, and appeal to facts in proof of what they say.

We wish it to be understood, that while, agreeably to the known principles as well of the Church of England as of the Episcopal Church in these States, we deny all subjection of the one to the other; we contemplate a unity of principle, in whatever belongs to doctrine, or to worship,

or to the Christian ministry, considered independently of any connection with the state, or other local circumstance. In all this, we are so far from denying identity of character, that the hope of perpetuating it enters into all our cares and labours.

But that this concern has no connection with an exterior influence, we refer for evidence to the journals which came from the press immediately after the transactions recorded in them respectively. When, in the year 1785, a convention of clerical and lay deputies from seven states, assembled in the city of Philadelphia, addressed the English bishops for the obtaining of the episcopacy, there was stated by the former an independency in religious concerns, the result of a civil independency, brought about in the course of Divine Providence. When, subsequently, three clergymen of this church crossed the Atlantic for consecration, the executive authorities in these states from which they went did not hesitate to certify, that the object was consistent with the constitutions and the laws of the respective states, and of the Union. Since the accomplishment of the object, the proceedings of the bishops, under the character with which they have been clothed, have been in public view; and there are no legitimate provisions by which their ministrations can be governed, besides those which are recorded on the printed journals. Accordingly, there can be no room for the influence in question, unless on the uncharitable suspicion of subjection to private instructions: which can no otherwise be disproved than by an appeal to the notorious fact, that there has been hitherto no evidence of their operation. At the source from which the episcopacy was derived, all the proceedings implied the independence of the American Church. The venerable prelates referred to, on the receipt of the application in which the principle was explicitly avowed, were not with-

held by it from the giving of a gracious answer to what they were pleased to call "the Christian and brotherly Address" of their transatlantic brethren. The civil disabilities lying on them, in relation to the requested benefit, were removed by their application to the proper authorities, without the participation of any citizen of the United States. And when, finally, three clergymen, sustaining that character, returned from England in the quality of bishops, they testified, that in their intercourse with those of England, nothing was more remarkable than their scrupulous delicacy to the civil duties of their visitants.

Your bishops, in stating these transactions, are aware that the agents in them could not have acted otherwise, consistently with the duties resulting from the circumstances in which they were respectively placed. This itself ought to be a ground of presumption of correct conduct in the premises, until some specific act in contrariety shall be alleged and proved. There has been no attempt to the effect, so far as we are informed. But as there have been suspicions and reports, we rejoice in the circumstance, that all the proceedings of our church, have been open to the eye of the world; and stand to this day on record for the satisfaction of inquirers, from whatever quarter the information may be desired.

While we thus vindicate our church from aspersion, it cannot escape our notice, and we ought not to be backward to state, that there is thus a ground laid for the asserting of her temporal rights. We conceive of various cases, in which the charge of subjection to foreign jurisdiction might shake the interests of our congregations in their houses of religious worship, and in other property for the maintaining of it. There being no such cause of possible disability, we take on ourselves to say, that when property has been purchased, or bestowed in the forms and within the limits

of the laws, for the worship of Almighty God agreeably to the institutions of our church, if she may be deprived of the same, whether it be by legislative authority for public uses, or by judicial determinations vesting it in any number of her seceding members, we have not the full benefit of a toleration. In the delivery of this sentiment, we do not mean to affirm any rights besides such as grow out of the privilege of worshipping God agreeably to the dictates of conscience; and out of contracts, for the carrying of the latter into effect. In an individual capacity, no man can be hindered in the choice of his mode of worship; and he needs no security of law to fence his privilege in that respect. It is as a member of a social body, united for the purposes of devotion, that he needs the protection of the laws; which is refused to him, if he may be divested of his rights, in either of the ways specified above. In thus affirming rights attaching to a membership of our communion, we claim no more than the being known to be a society of professing Christians: a species of fact, which, as we are advised, has been customarily recognized in judicial proceedings, in reference to various forms of profession in the United States; and in England, in favour of societies dissenting from the ecclesiastical establishment of that country; to such an extent, as that the individual is held to be bound by the rules of the society to which his voluntary membership has subjected him. If these positions be correct, we conceive it to follow, that when any members of our church have agreed to hold property for their common benefit, and in subjection to its constitution and its laws, the property attaches to those who may continue in the membership, and not to those who may secede from it. We ground the privation of the one, and the exclusive privilege of the other, on a contract to which both were parties, and not on the legal operation of the decisions of

our ecclesiastical tribunals, which is neither pleaded nor sought for on our part.

We cannot be on this part of the subject, without declaring our sense of the invasion of the temporal rights of our church, carried into effect in some parts of the Union by legislative seizures and sales of lands, originally acquired, and for a long time held under existing laws. Having been a suffering church in this particular, we trust there will remain to us the usual privilege of sufferers—that of complaint; especially as there will always be more or less the obvious causes of the injury; in some minds, of rooted hostility to religion in every shape; and in others, of the most virulent prejudices against our church in particular; the effect either of the most intolerant bigotry or of the most nauseous enthusiasm. For that, in some instances, these have combined with infidelity to bring injury on our church, is a fact too notorious to be denied.

We are not aware of any specious pretence, on which the principles affirmed by us can be contradicted, unless it be that of our being no longer what we were formerly—the Church of England in America. This matter may be stated as follows: The institutions of the said church, the sphere of which is confined to the countries within the jurisdiction of its civil government, no longer knew us in that character than during the continuance of our allegiance to her sovereign. On our part, we could no longer consider ourselves as under the same, consistently with the obligations under which we had been brought to the sovereignty of the United States. To suppose that the identity of religious communion is destroyed by such an event, and that they thereby forfeit the means of the public worship of God, agreeably to the dictates of their consciences, has indeed been alleged, but we believe, will never be made a ground of determination by any impartial tribunal of law.

We take occasion to suggest such advice and exhortation as appear to us to be the result of the statements made, taken in connection with the precepts of our holy religion. On this ground, we entreat the members of our church, both clerical and lay, that while they plead for her temporal rights, as essential to the free exercise of those of a spiritual nature ; both of which they hold in common with their fellow Christians of various religious denominations ; great care and vigilance be bestowed for the doing of this in the spirit of meekness ; and especially with due respect to the persons of civil rulers ; and to constitutional provisions, as well of the respective states, as of the Union. There is the greater difficulty in maintaining a proper temper on these subjects, in consequence of the share possessed by every member of the community, in elevating men to stations of responsibility and of power : this being the occasion of much collision of opinions and of interests. In us, it would be an abuse of ecclesiastical station, to dissuade any member of our church from the discretionary exercise of any privilege with which he is vested by constitution or by law. On the contrary, we are aware, that wherever there are rights of this sort, duties are attached to them. But we do not go beyond the limits of our sphere, when we exhort him to exercise those rights with integrity in regard to their declared objects ; and with moderation in pursuing what he believes to be in itself right : this, to the avoiding of whatever comes under the name of faction ; and much more of unlawful violence ; which are so often attendants on the exercise of popular privilege, and tend eventually to the loss of it. In proportion as the membership of our church shall be considered in itself presumptive of attachment to the government of law, and to the peace of the commonwealth, it will be understood by good men of every profession, that the institutions of the church itself are in the same

spirit, and tend to the same effect. For, that relation to such a body has an influence on individual character, can hardly be unknown to any who have comprehended human nature and the histories of states, among the subjects of their observation.

While we consider these remarks as applicable to persons of all orders in the church, and as pointing to duties, in which, as in others, it is incumbent on the clergy to be examples, we would further suggest to them, to avoid the being prominent on either side of any question of civil interest, involving difference of opinion among fellow-citizens; it being notorious of the contrary conduct, that if it have the effect of increasing the civil consequence of the agent, it is more than counterbalanced by a lessening of the weight of his ecclesiastical character. We forbear to enlarge on the discredit accruing to religion, from the unsocial passions and the unworthy arts by which political projects are sometimes accomplished. These, it may be said, are not necessarily the resort of men of any description. But if, from the infirmity of human nature, the field of employment in question is that in which their intrusion may be especially apprehended, it should surely be avoided by those who are in the common danger of being betrayed by it into sin, and in whom it is aggravated by its alliance with a ministry from which it is the most conspicuously alien. If these sentiments are correct, they apply with an increase of force to a clergyman's seeking of civil stations of responsibility and of profit. We do not concern ourselves with the question whether the constitution of a country may combine with its civil rule an ecclesiastical sanction for the accomplishing of the righteous ends of both. It is well understood that no such provision is made by the constitution and the laws to which we are subject. And we do not hesitate to say, that under the existing state of things,

when clergymen of our church aim at the exchanging of the ecclesiastical capacity for the civil, it is a degradation of the ministry, and especially a violation of the promises made in the services of ordination.

The other topic of this address, is the relation in which our church stands to professing Christians of other religious denominations, which has attached to it the peculiarity, that the inhabitants of this land, being emigrants, or their descendants, from different countries of the old world, of separate civil jurisdictions, and partly of different languages, have here met under circumstances which contain less specious ground of mutual hostility than perhaps can be found in any other portion of the Christian world, under a diversity of profession. Sustaining the same code of Revelation, we may reasonably expect of one another, to give a patient ear to the evidences on which we respectively rest our theories. But, as the weight of argument is not to be tested by the confidence of the party applying it, there is less pretence for irritation than where superiority has been long claimed and exercised by one portion of the community, and indignantly endured by another.

While we thus perceive a motive to mutual forbearance, and to the avoiding of personal irritation, we ought not to overlook an additional consideration of great weight, in the common cause of Christianity, and in detestation of that monster of infidelity, which, in our days, has reared his horrid crest in the view of the civilized world, and poured his deadly venom on whatever is estimable, either in civil or in domestic life. If the atrocities committed have detected the imposition, and exposed the true character of the agent, the recollection of what has happened should still be fresh in the memories of the advocates of Christianity; so that the profession of this in any form, ought to be preferred to irreligion, which cannot fail to be encouraged by

the intemperate passions, and by the mutual revilings of those who worship one God, through one Mediator, and in one hope of a blessed immortality.

In stating these things as motives to Christian sympathy, we perceive the danger of their being abused, to the encouragement of indifference. The giving of countenance to this is far from being our design. On the contrary, believing, as we do, that our church inherits the maxims of the earliest and best ages, prevailing before there arose that cloud of superstition which hung so long over the whole Christian world; and, of course, before the many notions of modern times, the novelty of which we conceive to be sufficient evidence of their unsoundness, we would sustain the apostolic injunction, of "earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints." But this is not inconsistent with the moderation for which we plead. On the contrary, so far as our observation extends, there appears to us to be less of piety and of charity in those counsels which affect to put all forms of profession on a level, than in a consistent, yet not intolerant adherence, to whatever has even the plausible appearance of a duly constituted church.

We desire to be considered as speaking of the public offices of the ministry: in regard to which there are some theories not likely to endanger the occurrence of any difficulty in this particular. Wherever the devotion of the people is directed to what we do not conceive of as the object of worship, the contrariety of character draws a line of distinction too discernible to be overlooked. There is a line equally definite between us and professing bodies who set aside the Divine institution of the ministry and the sacraments. Here are two descriptions of persons referred to, not as forfeiting our good will, on account of what we believe to be their errors, but because we are not likely to give offence, either to them or to others on their behalf by

a withholding of association as marked in practice as in theory.

But there are religious communions, not bordering on either of these extremes, and, at the same time, consenting with us in so many points, as occasionally to induce the wish of worthy persons among them, as of such persons among ourselves, that there may be an occasional intercommunity of services: it being presumed, that in such an intercourse, the peculiarities of the respective systems are to be lost sight of. On this subject, we owe to the members of our church an exposition of our sentiments, and of the grounds on which they rest. We shall consider the matter, as it respects the Christian ministry, worship and doctrine: the arrangement being adjusted to the prominency and the frequency of occurrence of the desire referred to of our losing sight of the properties of the respective systems.

1st. On the point of the Ministry, it is well known, that our church ascribes great importance to the position, that "from the Apostles' time, there have been in the Church of Christ the three orders, of Bishops, Priests and Deacons." And she presumes, that this is "evident from Scripture and from the writings of the early Fathers." We are aware, that this has been denied to have been the opinion of the Church of England, at the period of the Reformation. But it was at this period that the ordinal, from which the words are quoted, was composed; and the sense of them might be corroborated by citations from the writings of very early divines. This is not an occasion on which it will be expected of us to go into a proof of the original institution of episcopacy. It is sufficient for the present purpose, that we believe it to have been coeval with Christianity, and to have continued in the church universally, for the space of about 1,500 years. If this be our belief, how is it possible that we can officially recognize the organizing of non-epis-

copalian congregations, and the administering of the ordinances by a non-episcopalian ministry? We may esteem the persons, we may respect the talents, and we may rejoice in the usefulness of such a ministry, in proportion as there may be a ground for any or for all of this, in what passes around us in the world. We are free to declare, each of us for himself, that there is a tribute due from us under each of the heads enumerated. But we have a trust committed to us, which cannot be lost in those affections of the mind. We are aware of imperious circumstances in some places, and of prejudices arising out of existing habits in others, which have combined to impair the integrity of Christian discipline in this particular. But while these considerations confirm us in the disposition, which we cultivate on other accounts, of avoiding the casting of reproach and censure, they do not extend to the justifying of us, in countenancing such an inroad on the constitution of the Church of Christ. It is on this ground that we keep ourselves at a distance from all efforts for the encouraging of a ministry not episcopal, and for sanctioning its agency in the sacraments and other ordinances of the church.

2dly. In respect to Worship: We suppose it to be the most agreeable to Scripture, to reason, and to ancient practice, to conduct this holy exercise under the control of prescribed forms. We know that they prevailed in the services of the temple, arranged under the influence of inspiration; in those of the synagogue, which were joined in by our Lord in person; and in the primitive churches, which had their Common Prayers, as they are expressly called by Eusebius; although, under a diversity of expression, in different places, while on this account, and on other considerations, we prefer precomposed forms of prayer, our meaning would be misinterpreted, if understood to deny that other prayers than ours, and other than are either

printed or written, may be, and often are, both rational and evangelical. Our difficulty does not consist in joining in such a prayer, wheresoever, or by whomsoever delivered. But we find a difficulty in this, that in a joint ministry, to which there are attached services altogether dependent on the discretion of the officiating minister, we may be drawn unintentionally into the sanctioning of error. On some occasions it would be difficult to escape the dishonouring of our churches by such sallies of excessive sensibility, and even of passion, as render Divine worship an object of scorn. These things being put out of the question, the countenancing of irreverent expressions, or of declamatory enlargements in the act of prayer, which are possible, and will be allowed by all intelligent persons occasionally to happen, is what we would not wish even impliedly to approve of. Any of the enumerated particulars may be justly considered as encouraged by us, when they are attached to transactions, in which we are of the number of the agents.

The last particular is Doctrine. Under this head we have to lament, that while there are numerous professors and preachers of Christianity, with whom we consent in the acknowledgment of all that we esteem the essential truths of Christianity, we are discouraged from uniting with them in Gospel labours, because of their superadding of tenets, for which we find no authority in the Scriptures. If it should occur, that there may be inculcated truths held in common, to the neglect of what is likely to offend, there can be no doubt of this in theory, while there can be no security of it in practice; and experience shows, that the contrary is often the result. This department opens too wide a field for the proceeding further on it at present: we shall, therefore, conclude it with the remark, that while we call to mind, with regret, the points on which we differ from persons with whom we hold much salutary truth, we

look forward to the time when a greater diffusion of Christian light, and much more, an increased measure of Christian charity, with the help of mutual explanation and concession, shall lead them and us, not only with "one mind," as at present, but "with one mouth, to glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." This is a consideration which increases our dissatisfaction with such a mistaken union of courses, as produces collision of opinion, and excites the angry passions of our nature; thus causing estrangement of affection, to the aggravation of that which is in profession and outward order.

On the grounds of the statements now made, we take occasion to press on the members of our church generally adherence to her institutions. It requires but little consideration to foresee, that there is no security for the permanency of any of them, if they are to give way in part, in one congregation and in another within our pale, at the inconsiderate desire of persons, who, under the prospect of melioration, may soon have occasion to lament, that the result of their endeavours has been the opposite to what they had imagined. This is especially likely to happen, and has sometimes happened, in consequence of the very expedient against which we have been here endeavouring to erect a bar. On the happening of disappointments in this respect, we were not disposed to lament the issue, when we considered, that for the accomplishing of such an amalgamation as is affected by some, it would be necessary for us to sacrifice our views of the Christian Ministry, of the Sacraments, of Christian Worship, of the operations of Divine Grace, and of the extent of the mercies of God to a sinful world.

We are not ignorant, that the not holding and the not preaching of the doctrines of grace, are charges heaped on the clergy of our church generally, on account of their

rejection of some points of the description here referred to. Let it not be thought, that there is in us a desire of extenuating the guilt of any clergyman who is indifferent to, or who does not faithfully preach, the doctrines of grace in the proper sense of the expression. Doubtless they have a heavy account to render of the delinquency; and we charge the conscience of every clergyman with his responsibility in this respect. But there take shelter, under the cover of that property of Christian preaching, matters which are foreign to the institutions of our church, and, as we think, to the Scriptures. It would be a desertion of our trust, to endanger the admission of these within our pale.

Even where no scriptural truth is denied, and no unscriptural dogma is obtruded, we foresee, as the consequence of the intermixture of ministry, the introduction of various matters, so unsuitable to the species of devotion of which we have specimens in the Scriptures, to the remains of the piety of primitive antiquity, and to what has been transmitted to us through the channel of the Church of England; that neither of them can be acceptable to the same persons, or long be a property of the same communion.

We should be misunderstood, were we supposed to countenance intolerance against those who do not unite with us in our views of scriptural doctrine and worship. Far from this, we exhort all the members of our church to that moderation in the manner of sustaining the truth, that forbearance in the manner of opposing error, and that esteem for merit wheresoever found; the contrary to which has been; in so many instances, a reproach to the Christian name. We do not wish to see the institutions of our church, a cover of that "wrath of man, which worketh not the righteousness of God." Of many opinions conflicting with

ours, we believe that the origin of the diversity is in the different senses annexed to the words. In many other cases, we trace it to hereditary prejudice, descending from former times, without the hostility by which it had been generated. Even in regard to dogmas, which strike at any of the vital truths of Christianity, while we pray, that God "may give to the maintainers of them, repentance to the acknowledging of the truth," we do not suffer ourselves to determine to what extent it may be the result of involuntary error, much less take on ourselves the work of that day which will "bring to light the hidden things of darkness."

While we thus caution against increasing and perpetuating the divisions among Christian people, by the intrusion of unholy passion within the enclosure of sacred truth, we perceive a more effectual mean of the same end, in the maintaining of good temper, good manners, and good offices in the ordinary intercourses of society. It is a feature in the character of the civil constitution of this country, that people of very different descriptions of religious communion are brought together in the management of its civil concerns, not only of a high but of a subordinate grade, of constant occurrence, and having a bearing on every day's enjoyment of peace and safety. In this extensive department, there is a continual call for the exercise of candour, of patience and of whatever comes under the head of charity, in its various branches. In proportion as our form of profession is conducive to such virtues, it will be seen and confessed, that separation in religious concerns is not from the unsocial temper of the creed professed; but because it dictates the avoiding at the cost of any sacrifice, except of divine truth, every thing by which the harmony of social life may be impaired.

There will be a tendency to the same object, in whatever comes under the intimation given by St. Paul, "to adorn

the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." For in proportion as religion manifests its holy influence in the relations of domestic life, and in all our intercourses with one another; producing in all of them a strict regard to integrity and truth, and a faithful discharge of the duties which arise out of them respectively, it is a recommendation presenting itself to the eyes of all men; and giving ground of the presumption, that there must be an inward principle, answerable to such estimable fruits. It is the Christian doctrine alone which can obtain such a testimony, and this should be an inducement to all the members of our church, to cling close to its precious truths. The clergy in particular should be aware, that by presenting them continually to the minds of the people, and no otherwise, extensive good is to be accomplished. So long as the Gospel shall stand, "not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God," the latter will be illustrated in its triumphs over "the corruption that is in the world through lust," and in producing illustrious examples of piety and virtue: while there will be little good resulting from the other; and the best effect of it will be the producing of decency in the exterior conduct; the heart being left unrenewed, and falling short of a preparation for the "inheritance of the saints in light."

Both to the clergy and to the laity we desire to say, but most pointedly to the former, that the Christian profession exacts a greater abstraction from the world than that which consists in the abstaining from acknowledged sin. There are practices so nearly allied, and so easily abused to it, that we conceive of a professor of religion in duty bound either not to countenance them in the least degree; or, as is allowable in regard to some of the matters contemplated, to avoid the so employing of time, and the so lavishing of

affection, as puts into a state of sin, although not necessarily belonging to the subject. We would be far from an endeavour after an abridgment of Christian liberty. But we cannot forget, that in a list of the classes of evil livers, there is introduced the description of persons who are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;" nor, in respect to the female professors of religion in particular, the admonition, that "she who liveth in pleasure is dead, while she liveth." We are aware of the difficulty of drawing the line between the use of the world and the abuse of it: that being conceived of by different persons equally pious and virtuous, according to the diversity of natural temperament, and of the states of society in which they have been placed by education or by habit: but we know, that where the conscience can reconcile itself to the drawing as near to the territory of sin, as it can persuade itself to be consistent with the still standing on secure ground, deadness to spiritual good at the best, but more commonly subjection to its opposite, is the result.

In speaking of subjects of the above description, we would not be understood to class among them any practice which is either immoral in itself, or so customarily accompanied by immorality, that the one is necessarily countenanced with the other. Of the former description, is gaming in all the variety of its exercise: and the like may be said of whatever involves cruelty to the lower animals of the creation. If the same cannot be affirmed of works of fiction, and of putting speeches into the mouths of feigned characters, for the purpose of instruction or of entertainment; yet as the question is applicable to the exhibitions of the theatre, such as they have been in every age, and are at present, we do not hesitate to declare unanimously our opinion, that it is a foul source of very extensive corruption. We lay little stress on the plea, that it is a matter

practicable in social institutions, to purge the subject from the abuses which have been attached to it. When this shall have been accomplished, it will be time to take another ground. But, in truth, we are not persuaded of the possibility of the thing, when we consider that the prominent and most numerous patrons of the stage are always likely to be the least disposed to the seriousness which should enter into whatever is designed to discriminate between innocence and guilt. While the opinions and the passions of such persons shall continue to serve the purpose of a looking-glass, by which the exhibited characters are to be adjusted to the taste of so great a proportion of the public, we despair of seeing the stage rescued from the disgusting effusions of profaneness and obscenity; and much less of that mean of corruption, more insinuating than any other—the exhibiting of what is radically base, in alliance with properties captivating to the imagination.

While we address this alike to the clergy and to the laity, we consider it as especially hostile to the usefulness of the former. And even in regard to some matters confessed to be innocent in themselves, their innocency may depend much on many circumstances, and of professional character among others. The ear of a clergyman should always be open to a call to the most serious duties of his station. Whatever may render it difficult to his own mind to recur to those duties with the solemnity which they require, or may induce an opinion in others, that such a recurrence must be unwelcome to him from some enjoyment not congenial with holy exercise, ought to be declined by him. If it be a sacrifice, the making of it is exacted by what ought to be his ruling wish, the serving of God, and the being useful to his fellow men, in the discharge of the duties of the ministry.

With the assurance of our unceasing prayers for the welfare of our spiritual Zion, we conclude this our fourth Pastoral Letter.

Signed by order of the House of Bishops,

WILLIAM WHITE, D. D., Presiding Bishop.

New-York, May 27, 1817.

PASTORAL LETTER No. V.

FROM THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL
CHURCH, ASSEMBLED IN GENERAL CONVENTION AT PHILA-
DELPHIA, MAY, A. D., 1820.

BRETHREN,

ANOTHER triennial convention enjoins on us the duty of another Pastoral Letter, agreeably to the forty-fifth Canon.

During the session, our attention has been seriously occupied by the reports from the church in the different states, made to the house of clerical and lay deputies, and by them submitted to our perusal.

A prominent event conspicuous in them, is the organization of our church in the state of Ohio; and the extending to it of the episcopacy: a measure which had been contemplated in four conventions, and is at last happily accomplished. It is not the state of Ohio only, to which we anticipate resulting benefit: but it is the whole of the western territory; over the extent of which there are scattered members of our communion, to whose wants the urgent claims of destitute congregations in the Atlantic states have prevented ministerial supplies. We may now hope to see the evil remedied, by the educating of ministers among themselves: since what has been accomplished has a tendency to this

effect also ; not only by saving the trouble and the expense of long journeys for ordination, but by the engaging of the zealous endeavours of the right reverend bishop, and of the few clergymen who have migrated from the eastern side of the mountains, for the furnishing of candidates with suitable opportunities of preparation.

In the last general convention, it was highly gratifying, that there had been such an organization of the church in North Carolina, as entitled them to be recognized in that character. On the present occasion, our satisfaction has been increased by the appearance of two clerical and one lay deputy from that part of the Union ; and still more by finding from the report before us, that there is a good prospect of the stability and the increase of our church, where it had been so long prostrate.

Another source of satisfaction to us, is, that when the District of Maine took its station in the Union in the character of a state, there was a sufficiency of the members of our communion, for an organization as a diocesan church. We anticipate, in hope, an increase of this distant part of our communion.

We go no further in remarks on the details of the report, as it describes the condition of the church in the various states, any further than to express our satisfaction at the encouragement which it supplies, and at the prospects which it opens, with our wishes that they may be realized.

The report concludes with a call on the house of bishops, to declare their sense on two interesting subjects—the carrying into effect of the provision of the rubrics relative to public baptism, their being understood—the exception of cases of “great cause and necessity,” and the qualifications of sponsors.

On the first of these subjects, we give our opinion, that it is the duty of the clergy, in their respective cures, to en-

deavour by argument and persuasion, to accomplish a strict conformity to the rubric ; and we know not on what principle it can be dispensed with except on that admitted in all jurisprudence ecclesiastical and civil—prevalent and long custom, not censured by those whose office it is to call to account for the violation of law. In the present case, the toleration of the departure from the rubric in our mother Church of England, for a long course of preceding years, and generally in the United States before and since the Revolution, has weight on the present question.

It is worthy of notice, that between these two countries there is a great difference of circumstances operating against a strict observance of the rubric in our case. In every part of England, there is easy access of the people to their minister, in the public performance of the service of the church ; whereas, in consequence of the scattered residence of a great proportion of our Episcopalian population in numerous districts of the United States, it is difficult and often impossible for people to bring their children very many miles for the purpose of their being baptized ; or even to present them for reception after private baptism ; which of course will be the whole received by them : and this, although an entire baptism, is short of what was contemplated by the rubric.

These are considerations, which make us hesitate to aim at a degree of discipline, found to be unattainable in our parent church, although so much more favourably circumstanced for such an object. They are, however, what would have no weight with us, had the necessity of public baptism been enjoined on us by the word of God. This is not the case ; as is attested by St. Philip's baptizing of the eunuch, recorded in the eighth chapter of the Acts ; by the narrative of the baptism of St. Paul, in the ninth chapter ;

by that of Cornelius and his household in the tenth, and by that of the jailer and his family in the sixteenth.

However weighty these facts, they do not render us insensible to the reasons on which public baptism was introduced by ecclesiastical legislation, at an early period of the church. Accordingly, we again hold up to the conscience of every minister, the duty of his endeavouring to induce to it by argument and by persuasion. But we hesitate to enjoin strict conformity to the rubric, when we know, that the consequence would be the leaving of a great proportion of the rising generation unbaptized; and the surrendering of another great proportion of them to the being baptized under circumstances which would tend to attach them to communions differing from our own.

On the other question, the qualifications of sponsors, we have in the first place to remark, that, in the service, there are made very solemn appeals to the consciences of those who answer for a child: such, that if they can reconcile themselves to false professions in this shape, it does not appear why they need to hesitate to extend the falsehood further. Independently of this, we should fear to authorize the minister's scrutiny into the movements of the mind of the party, which would make an inquisitor and a tyrant of every minister, whose constitutional character might incline him to the taking of such a stand.

In any case in which an infant may be presented by a person who is an "open and notorious evil liver," the fact being known to the minister, with such evidence as that he can commit his conscience and his character on the issue, we think that the rejection would be laudable, and indeed a duty. But we do not carry this matter so far as might be an incitement to the minister to hazard the incurring of the guilt of slander; perhaps to the putting of himself in danger of legal punishment: for although we suppose our courts

to have great indulgence to the plea of the conscience of a clergyman, when its dictates are grounded on the institutions of his church; yet, where no such sanction can be perceived, but rather a contrariety, we think it probable, that there cannot be an inquiry into the private lives of people, without its being followed by very unhappy consequences.

How far it would be expedient to require that the sponsor should be a communicant, may be thought deserving of consideration. Both rubrics and canons are silent as to this point: so that if the minister should exact such a condition, it would be a passing of the limits of his authority. If it should be held, that the state of the church is such as to render the expedient desirable, it should be by a concurrent act of the two houses. But we doubt of the expediency of this, in the present circumstances of the church; when there are so many, who are kept from the holy communion by prejudice and by misapprehension. We rejoice in what we know of the gradual decline of this restraint, from the most unequivocal form in which the profession of the name of Christ can be made before the world. Perhaps it may be thought, that the expedient now in question would tend to the same desirable issue. We are persuaded of the contrary; and having witnessed the bad effects of all measures of this sort which will bear the appearance of denunciation or of exposure to public censure, and knowing that they have a tendency to the reverse of their designs, we wish on this point, as on the other, that there may be wielded no other arms than those of argument and persuasion.

We will conclude our remarks on both the subjects with stating, that our attention having been called to them by the representatives of the clerical and the lay deputies of our church, the occasion has been fraught with the advantage

to us of a free comparing of our respective experience; and the consequence has been unanimity, in this free delivery of our resulting opinion.

It seems to have been expected of the house of bishops, that in their triennial address, they should present to the consideration of their fellow-members of the church, some subject or subjects called for by existing circumstances. We wish to bring forward, on the present occasion, what may be called the evangelical doctrine of our church, not as detached from her moral requisitions, but as including them; yet in opposition to every scheme which affects to do honour to the latter, by disparaging or dispensing with the other. There is no point, which it more concerns her to maintain, or that more distinguishes her from many human institutions, directed perhaps to laudable ends, but not claiming to be Divine establishments, and therefore subjected to the determinations of human prudence.

The subject might be branched into a great variety of particulars, but we shall confine our view to the evidence of the property affirmed, and to the result of it on our ecclesiastical concerns: and let it be remarked, that whatever may be the ground proper to be occupied on these points, they concern not the clergy only, but all whose religious states may depend in any degree on the instructions which the clergy are to deliver.

In the display of the evidence of the evangelical character of our church, there will be no necessity of tracing the sentiment through all her doctrines and all her services; although on all of them the property in question has a discernible influence. It will be sufficient to delineate a few prominent truths of Scripture, as professed by her in explicit terms; and to appeal, for the rest, to her unimpeached consistency of profession.

One of the truths which we present, as borne witness to

by our articles, and not by them only, but by innumerable passages in our prescribed devotions, is the natural state of man in the apostacy : as being that of alienation from God, not only in the forfeiture of immortality annexed to his original creation, but in a deterioration of his nature, in consequence of which its properties, in themselves suited to the purposes of his being, run wide of their appropriate uses ; except so far as they may be restrained by worldly motives, having in them nothing of religious affection ; or else subjected to a principle originating not in nature, but in a dispensation succeeding that which ended in Paradise.

We do not know in what terms our church could have declared her sense more explicitly, than in those adopted by her. She begins her series of the doctrines of grace, by laying down the point of original sin ; that is, the sin attached to our origin : according to which the first man forfeited, for himself and his posterity, the gratuitous gifts which might have been originally denied to him without injustice, and conditionally held by him until his apostacy ; and further, became subject to want and to disease, and to the temptations incident to them ; and thereby to a natural tendency to sin.

Although our church considers the progeny of Adam as destitute of religious affections, and at the same time possessed of properties, which, for want of the restraints of such affections, and because of exposure to temptation, have a tendency to all evil, yet she has not announced the many opinions which human ingenuity has founded on the premises. While we see no cause to acknowledge any defect in her institutions in this particular, we lament any representations of them which make abatement from her decision, that man "is far gone from original righteousness"* and is of his own nature inclined to evil.

* Some prefer the Latin copy, which has "*quam longissime*,"

Another doctrine of our church, and what is a consequence of that already stated, is the utter inability of man, by any act or endeavour of his own, to recover from the privations of the apostacy. She could not have expressed herself in stronger language, than when she says—"The condition of man, after the fall of Adam, is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God: wherefore, we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will." When the articles were formed, there was an especial call for this explicitness; because of a species of pretended ability set up, by which the mind might prepare itself for grace, which could not be denied consistently with congruity: and this led to the notion of a further measure of grace, the fruit of the grace before given, and therefore now claimable on the ground of condignity. In contrariety to this curiously-wrought theory, our church teaches concerning even the preparatory exertions spoken of, that they proceed from grace bestowed on the part of God, and submitted to and improved on the part of man.—This view of the subject divests him of every pretence for trusting in his own strength: the vanity of which is fully established by consciousness of frailty, and by the inefficacy of mere resolution for the encountering of the temptations of the world; at the same time, that it abounds with incitements to the encouraging of every holy thought, and for the carrying of every good desire into effect. The con-

in English, "as far as possible." On the ground taken, there can be no objection: entire destitution of religious affections being affirmed. However, the English article is of the most authority, being the act of the earliest reformers, and not rendered into Latin until the reign of Elizabeth.

trary is the resistance of an agency, the discontinuance of which would render our condition desperate.


While each of the truths stated is big with improvement, especially attaching to itself, they combine in establishing, as a third truth, what the church teaches in another article,—that “we are accounted righteous before God, only for the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings.” The truth is laid down in few words, but is amplified in one of the homilies, which, on that account, is referred to in the article, for a more full disclosure of the sense entertained concerning this subject of the highest importance. While it appears from the homily, that there is a disclaiming of merit, as attaching to any action which can be performed by man, faith is discoursed of, as containing in itself the seed or principle of every religious grace, and, of course, as manifesting itself in the conduct. This bars all pretence of approach to the solifidial scheme; whether showing itself in the undisguised shape of Antinomianism, or rendering this a natural although unperceived inference from a mistaken method of magnifying the grace of God in Christ. So that if we compare the eleventh article with the homily on salvation or justification, we shall perceive the consistency of what the church says in her twelfth article,—that “although good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God’s judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith; insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit.” There is entire consistency, in the affirming in the most unqualified terms, of acceptance only through the merits of the Redeemer; and yet, in defining the end of the acceptance to be, the bringing to the state of mind which will manifest itself in a

Phil: A. Thompson

holy life and conversation. This is the double head of instruction, in the passage in which it is said, "who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

We have stated only a few, and them with brevity, of what we name the evangelical principles of our church. That they are few, is owing to their being so far sufficient, as that they cannot consistently be held in alliance with any opinion dissonant from the truth that salvation is of grace. Our brevity is owing to the desire which we entertain, of noticing principally the result of the principle on our ecclesiastical concerns: the existence of the principle being considered as a matter hardly liable to be denied or doubted of.

First, there is no truth more prominent in Scripture, or that more deserves to be kept in view in our meditations on its contents, than what is affirmed where it is said—"that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God:" that is, not seem to rest on the former ground, because it is a foundation too slight for the superstructure; but maintaining its place on the latter—a revelation established by an omnipotent agency. If so, consistency dictates the position, that Christian doctrine and Christian morals should go hand in hand, for the accomplishing of their common object, the reformation of mankind. The imperfection of the moral system of the wisest among the heathen, is so clearly resolvable into the corruptions of their theology, that if there could be proved to have been among them any knowledge of God and of his attributes independently of revelation, of which, however, we entertain doubts, it would still follow, that the morals of Christianity are essentially dependent on the disclosures which it makes of the Divine economy in redemption. In



addition to this, there is the notorious fact of a deterioration in the principles and in the conduct of every body of men from whom, in any country professedly Christian, the Scriptures are concealed, or suffered to be only partially communicated, in consequence of a corrupt policy ; and of the other description of persons, who desert the standard of Christ and enlist under that of infidelity.

These considerations prove that there is an intimate connection between the truths and the duties of our holy religion. Let it be acknowledged, that moral perfection, comprehending the state of the affections as well as the exterior of the conduct, is the ultimate end to which all religion should be considered as subservient. Still, taking into view the human character on which the dispensation is to operate, we may pronounce, that it will never accomplish its intended effect, independently of the high truth, that “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.”

In giving expression to our sentiments on this subject, we would be far from countenancing that love of speculation, which leads to the display of ingenuity in unprofitable controversy. Equally far would we be from countenancing the cast of character, which does not look either for instruction or for edification in religious inquiries, otherwise than through the medium of the agitation of our animal mechanism. Further, we wish to guard every conscientious professor against the speaking disparagingly of moral worth. In its strict meaning, it implies a right state of the inward man ; and in its extent, it comprehends whatever is an imitation of the holiness of God. But there is an imperfection in language, which has occasioned the use of the word morality, as if it were no more than the being free from outward and flagitious sin. To deny the sufficiency of this for the constituting of acceptableness with God, is certainly the indispensable demand of evangelical truth. But in

doing this, there is need of caution, lest the unwary hearer should be led to low conceptions of duties, resting on the double ground of reason and Revelation, considering material deficiency in them as made amends for, by the occasionally possessing of warm feelings of devotion. We have been mourning witnesses of the bad consequences of this, in its sanctioning of the want of government of the passions, and in its being a hindrance to the good offices which the social relations call for.

We have even reason to fear, that, as in a certain species of superstition, the stated performance of appointed acts of external devotion, is a mean of reconciling to the conscience all intermediate deviations from the Divine law; so a similar effect is produced even by inward sensibilities of the animal organization, in their being a palliative for a like laxity in some one or another of those offences against Christian morals, which cover themselves under a pharisaical profession.

Hitherto, the subject has been spoken of generally, and without a special reference to the exercises of the pulpit: but its bearing on these is too important, as well to hearers as to preachers, not to be particularly attended to.

Therefore, secondly; if the ground taken be correct, there should be frequently laid before congregations, with the suitable proofs and illustrations, the truths of the Gospel the most prominent, and such as it cannot be divested of, without its being left a mere collection of moral precept, and a thread of historic record. We esteem it an advantage, that there is the appointed observance of certain days, to which those subjects are peculiarly appropriate: for although the pastor of a congregation ought not to need such incitements to so unquestionable a duty, yet it may be of use to them both, to have so distinct a call to subjects which might otherwise be in danger of being regarded too

slightly. We do not mean to intimate, that these are the only occasions on which the truths referred to may be at large stated from the pulpit; much less would we imply, that they are not to be discoverable, except when made the professed subjects of discourse.

For this reason we go on to remark, thirdly, that if a minister should explain to his flock any passage of sacred history, or, if he should define and incite to the attainment of any religious grace, or if he should delineate and exhort to the practice of any of the moral duties; in each of these departments, and in any other that might be named, there opens an opportunity of explaining, of proving, of illustrating, and of persuading in such a manner, as shall throw an infusion of the virtue of evangelical truth, into the discussion of every topic. In an especial manner, the motives to duty show this dependence on the spirit of the system. There can be no reasonable objection, to the proposing of motives resulting from moral fitness and from the dictates of prudence, Saint Paul himself having thought it worthy of his notice, to hold up to view "the promise of the life that now is." But the force of this will be feeble, unless we go on with him to "the life that is to come." The hope of the latter cannot be proposed with such evidence as shall render it "an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast," except as it is furnished by the dispensation which "hath brought life and immortality to light." But the dispensation must be taken in its full scope; since otherwise, the light is wanting, by which the life and the immortality are assured to us.

We are now entering on a subject of considerable delicacy; but it is forced on us by the preceding train of our reflections. The subject is—do the clergy of this church in their ministerial exercises, give sufficient manifestation of their being under the influence of what we have shown

to be the evangelical spirit of the communion? In consequence of our own engagements, we are imperfect judges on this question; but we grieve when we hear of deficiency in this particular, warranting the charge that the desk and the pulpit are at variance. We bear our solemn protest against inconsistency of this description. We hold up to all our brethren of the ministry, what we conceive to be their and our duty in this matter. And we feel consolation in being in possession of a liturgy, which continually sends forth its protest, not only against error, but against suppression of material truth; and which, even as used by an unfaithful pastor, has sometimes preserved a hearer from being misled by him, or from being ignorant of the truths on which he is silent.

We cannot but know, that the distinction between evangelical and merely moral preaching is often misapplied to discourses which sustain Christian morals in alliance with the ground of them, in the truths of the ever blessed Gospel; for there are some, who confound with the latter, systems of human fabrication, and some who deem nothing evangelical, that stops short of the extravagances of enthusiasm. There are many such instances, each of them contradictory to all the others, and all of them wide of the simplicity of Scriptural truth. The sincere minister of the Gospel may derive profit from what he hears and sees of this description, since he may be admonished by it to be the more definite and the more earnest in inculcating what is thus perverted and abused. In doing this, he cannot too carefully regard an admonition, given by a venerable prelate long since deceased, to certain American missionaries of his day. They had been accused to him of not preaching the truths of the Gospel. Without presuming the justice of the accusation, of which no evidence had been transmitted to him, he advised them to be the more

attentive to the preaching and the clearing of the truths, which had been misrepresented or misapplied by others. The prelate was Archbishop Secker, than whom there was none in his high station who had been more attentive to the concerns of the then infant churches of our communion.

The weight which ought to be allowed to the admonition of that eminent person, may be estimated by the fourth consideration to be now offered, the interest which should in reason be taken in the sustaining of the point proposed by us in this address.

It ought to be sufficient for the purpose, that the losing sight of it has a strong tendency to infidelity ; to which we think it leads by a process of the mind not easily prevented. That the Scriptures say much of the character of the divine Author of our religion, of his being a sacrifice for sin, of the benefit of his redemption, and of the need of it in the state of man, is what even a superficial reader of them can hardly fail to have remarked. But if these are to be overlooked, under pretence of respect for the sanctity of Christian morals, it seems to follow, that the world, being in possession of the latter, we are but little concerned in the question; by what channel of communication we have become possessed of them, any more than if a like question were to be raised in reference to the instructions of the heathen sages. It is true, as we have already remarked, that Christian morality is not long sustained in its integrity, when it has become severed from Christian doctrine. But the deterioration is induced gradually, and without men's being aware of the inconsistency of their profession in this respect. Were this not to happen, the severance must at least take away the sanction of divine command, than which there is no other motive sufficient to the resistance of human passion, and to be a counterpoise to the temptations of the world. In short, it was set forth by Christ in the beginning, that "the Gospel of the king-

dom should be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations." It is, therefore, to be taken in its full latitude, and cannot be narrowed by any expedient, which will not at last destroy it.

Accordingly, there is another motive to the taking of a deep interest in the subject: we mean, that wherever there is the separation here censured, it disqualifies the discourses of the pulpit from being any considerable mean of the conversion of sinners. This is a fact, which may be confirmed to us by observation. The fact may be accounted for, from the genius of the Christian system: for, as there can be no conversion of the heart from sin, without a beginning in repentance and humiliation; and as these would be fruitful of despair, unless met by the consolations which the Gospel only can supply; the removal of the truths of the system must be a bar to reformation, and to the means by which it is to be accomplished.

We do not doubt, that the consolations of the Gospel are often brought home to the awakened heart, by the edifying matter of our Common Prayer. But, when this is done independently of aid from wholesome instructions of the preacher, he is without an agency in any good which may be thus achieved; and not only so, there is lost, through his insufficiency, the influence of an important institution appointed by Divine wisdom for the salvation of mankind. It will be in vain, that we may be told of the tumults of passion, which are sometimes produced by a zealous preaching of the Gospel. When this happens, it is owing to errors unhappily associated with the truth. Even then although the effects are often evanescent, yet instances occur of sinners thus converted from the error of their ways; which shows, how much more lasting benefit may be accomplished by the same truths as declared in the Gospel; but proclaimed to sinners in such terms, as shall cause them to reach their hearts through the medium of their understand-

ings. Let Saint Paul be attended to, giving a lesson as to this point. He could not have delivered a more complete code of morals, than when he stated that of Christianity to be "the living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." And yet he began with laying the groundwork of this exhibition of Christian morals, in the "grace of God to all men," which had "appeared."

Further, we wish another motive to be considered as well by the laity as by the clergy ; by both as affecting the consistency of their profession, and by the latter, as adding to this a failure of fidelity pledged under the most solemn promises, on their entering into the ministry. The motive is, that the said line of separation, drawn between Christian doctrine and Christian morals, is one of the most effectual means which could have been devised for the producing of the decline, and at last the destruction of this church : which indeed ought not to be lamented, on the supposition of the correctness of the distinction made ; because there will be the obvious inference, that she teaches with great zeal, many things which are irrelevant to the spiritual and everlasting happiness of men. We see no inducements to such severance, in any instances which are brought to our recollection of religious communion formed with an accommodation to the principle. We rather consider such associations, as opening an easy passage to infidelity. Still, there may be consistency between the profession and the practice. But when persons so disposed insidiously intrude into the ministry of our church, there is a difference in the two cases ; like that between poison, so placed as that it may be mistaken for medicine, and the same substance insinuated into the constitution, and preying on its vitals.

While we are sustaining the evangelical character of our church, and tracing the effects which it should produce as well on the laity as on the clergy of her communion, we

would especially impress on the consciences of the latter, the engaging in this part of their work, with a degree of zeal suited to its importance. The truths of the Gospel may be correctly preached, while there is nothing in the matter or in the manner of the discourse, nor yet in the life and the conversation of the preacher, indicating a controlling ascendancy of the truth over his affections. We would be far from estimating his character, in proportion to the degree of animal fervour either in his public or in his private exercises. We learn from the highest authority, and we see or hear of frequent verifying of the position, that there is "a zeal not according to knowledge." What is worse, there may be a settled cast of character, moulded to the temporary feelings attendant on the hasty judgment of two of the disciples of our Saviour, when they would have "called down fire from heaven" on the inhospitable inhabitants of a Samaritan village. Even when a man is "zealously affected in a good thing," and when his zeal is manifested in the sacred desk, and on subjects suited to it; however laudable this, and however necessary in a due degree to the evincing of his sincerity; it is impossible, that the degree should give a rule of measurement of the integrity of his mind: because, not knowing his heart, we cannot minutely perceive its movements; and because, so deceitful is the heart, that the agent himself may not be aware, in what degree the love of applause, or the love of rule, or some other frailty of nature, may associate itself with a general wish to promote the glory of God and the good of his fellow men. Thus, if it be not the dead fly that spoils the precious ointment of the word, yet it is a weed from nature's sour soil, causing a disrelish of the fruits of grace.

For this reason, although we approve of all well-tempered zeal in instructions delivered from the pulpit, and, indeed, consider the absence of it as a proof of indifference stamped

on the character of the instructor; yet we see a more unequivocal test of the purity of this affection, in habitual conversation seasoned with the salt of divine grace, unalloyed by vanity or by ostentation; in vigilance for opportunities of speaking a word in season; in reproof, so administered as not to be liable to the charge of arrogance, or of the love of censure; and in consolation conveyed under the various states of mind, which cannot but be often laid open to every minister of the Gospel, who is qualified for such occasions, and who feels an interest in promoting the spiritual welfare of the applicants. We know that a minister may be occupied in such employment, without the eclat which is sometimes attendant on very moderate talent, put forth to public view in the exercises of the pulpit: but while we know not how far the one is associated with vanity, either as its cause or as its effect; the other resolves itself into the sole cause of ministerial fidelity; and points to the effects of an approving conscience in the minister, and of edification to the people.

The result of the considerations which have been detailed, is a solemn call to be now made by us on the members of our church generally, and especially on her clergy; on the former, to sustain, in their respective spheres, the character of the communion which has been displayed; and to be on their guard against any professors under the name of churchmen, who would be thought to have in their hands the lamp of their profession, although they have emptied it of its oil. Of clergymen of this description, we do not hesitate to say, that they are enemies under the deceitful appearance of friendship. St. Paul has described the essentials of Christian doctrine under the image "of a foundation, other than which no man can lay," and he has represented instructions of various sorts, under the figure of materials laid on that foundation, differing in their re-

spective value: as “gold, silver and precious stones” on the one hand, differ from “wood, hay and stubble” on the other. What we are here faulting, comes under neither of these heads, but is an abandoning of the foundation.

If there be any who make inroads on the order of the worship of our church, under the notion that they are thereby rising to a greater height of evangelism; we guard against being understood, as in any degree favouring such disorder. On the contrary, if it were given way to, there would follow the destruction of the characteristic features of our church, inherited by her from her mother church of England. It is the desire of the hearts of your bishops, to perpetuate the principles of that church as cleared from antisciptural inventions at the Reformation: and in this design, we invite the co-operation of all the members of our communion.

Signed by order of the House of Bishops,

WILLIAM WHITE, Presiding Bishop.

PASTORAL LETTER No. VI.

FROM THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH, ASSEMBLED IN GENERAL CONVENTION, AT PHILADELPHIA, MAY, A. D. 1823.

BRETHREN,

BEING assembled in general convention with the clerical and the lay deputies of our church, from the several sections of the Union, we comply with a call of duty laid on us by the forty-fifth canon of 1808, in presenting to you this Pastoral Address.

We congratulate our church at large on the addition to the Episcopal body, made during the session of this convention, by the consecration of a bishop for the State of North Carolina. Our prospects were, for a long time, especially discouraging, because of the prostration of our church in that district of our civil union. Within these few years, the scene had brightened, by deputies sent to the last three general conventions, and by well attested information of the increase of congregations, and of renewed attention to religious institutions. Under the influence of feelings excited by these events, it cannot but be highly gratifying to us, to have had personal agency in conveying the Episcopal character to a brother unanimously elected for that department of the vineyard; whom we receive

with confidence to participation in our counsels ; and from whose qualifications we hope, that under the Divine blessing, he will be eminently useful in extending the kingdom of the Redeemer.

We behold with pleasure, the accession of deputies from the church in the State of Georgia, the only one of the original thirteen States of the Union, which had hitherto borne no part in our proceedings : not, as is believed, from the not feeling of any interest in the welfare of our church ; but because of the want of suitable persons to give a beginning to energetic measures, for the revival of her dormant institutions.

There has been submitted to us by the house of clerical and lay deputies, an exhibition, gathered from the reports of the several local conventions, of the circumstances of the church within their respective bounds.

On the perusal of the statements, it became to us an agreeable subject of contemplation, that our church throughout these states, is on the increase ; as is attested by the many new churches erected in various places, and by additions to the numbers of worshippers in very many of the congregations. May God grant, that in proportion as there shall be seen in her what verifies the promise to the church generally, of there being “ a lengthening of the cords and a strengthening of the stakes of her habitations,” there may be found a proportionate “ adorning of the doctrine of our God and Saviour in all things.” But while we cherish the hope that the labours of the ministry have not been without fruit in relation to this its great end ; yet we are aware, that, to use the language of one of our articles, “ the evil will ever be mingled with the good,” or, to use the more authoritative language of our Saviour, that “ the tares will grow together with the wheat,” and that, therefore, there will still press on ourselves, and on all our reverend bre-

thren, the charge laid on us in ordination, of “never ceasing our labour, our care, and our diligence, until we have done all that lieth in us, according to our bounden duty,” to bring all “such as are or shall be committed to our charge, unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left among us either for error in religion or for viciousness in life.” Especially, the calling of sinners to repentance, and the carrying of the consolations of the Gospel to the bosoms, as well of those in sorrow under the sense of sin, as of those borne down by any of the calamities of life, will be, to the faithful minister, incentives to constant anxiety and exertion. Also, to the godly of every occupation, there will be motives to the doing of whatever may reasonably be expected, for the encouraging of him in his pastoral duties.

From the same statements, we derive the satisfaction of finding that it has pleased God to give his blessing on the endeavours which have been put forth, as well by individuals as by religious associations, for the extending of the means of grace, both to destitute and decaying congregations which had been formerly flourishing, and to the people of our communion in those extensive tracts of country which have been lately subjected to cultivation; and in which, without aid from the seats of their former residence, there is the danger of the degenerating of their posterity to utter ignorance of the truths of our holy religion; and consequently to licentiousness, and perhaps to barbarism. But while we rejoice in every instance of Christian zeal, put forth for the perpetuating of the light of the Gospel wherever it is in danger of being lost, we cannot shut our eyes to the notorious facts that the breaches made in our Zion, during former years of distress, are not yet repaired; and that the growth of the new settlements in population is, beyond

proportion to any aids which have been administered to them. Although the latter circumstance is the result of the many years of the unexampled prosperity of our common country, yet we foresee, that however great this blessing in itself, it calls for the alliance of religion; without which, it will eventually be a calamity, by a deterioration of the national character, poisoning the sources of public happiness.

It is a more unmixed source of satisfaction to us, that there is visible, over the face of our communion, a disposition to strengthen the bonds of Christian charity; and to avoid such questions as gender strife, and often end in schism. From the beginning of our organization, this temper of conciliation has been manifested; and may therefore be humbly hoped to have been generated by the gracious influences of the great Being, who, as one of our collects expresses it, is "the author of peace and lover of concord." That there should be occasionally differences of opinion, especially on subjects locally interesting, is to be expected from the imperfection and the frailties of human nature. But they may stop short of material injury, if they should hereafter, as heretofore, be conducted with moderation, and yield to the interposition of healing counsels; which, under the blessing of God, may improve such occasions to the promoting of his glory, by their being made provocatives to love and to good works.

It is no small addition to the satisfaction of "being at peace among ourselves," that we are on terms of good neighbourhood and Christian sympathy with our fellow-Christians of other denominations. We promised in ordination, to "maintain and set forwards, as much as in us should lie, quietness, peace, and love among all Christian people;" and although this object is not to be accomplished by the surrendering of Gospel truth, since we are bound to "con-

tend for the faith once delivered to the saints ;” yet it is a duty which may be discharged under the control of Christian meekness. Moreover, if it should seem to any, that, for the “ following of peace with all men,” there should be an abandonment of those properties of our church, which we believe to have descended to us from the earliest and best ages, such compliance would not only be contrary to obligations most solemnly assumed, but, far from promoting the proposed object of conciliation, would be more operative than any other cause that can be imagined, to the opening of a door for the hydra of religious controversy. The wisest and the most Christian course that can be pursued by us, is to conduct the concerns of our church agreeably to its matured and long existing institutions, and under the sense of responsibility to its Divine Head ; but without reference to others, professing to worship the same God through the merits of the same Redeemer ; except to put the most favourable construction on their acts, to rejoice in any good resulting from them, and scrupulously to avoid whatever may have a tendency to excite angry passions either in them or in ourselves.

In our former Pastoral Letters, we have freely delivered our opinions on the various points which were considered by us, at the several times, as the most interesting to our communion. They are still held by us in the same grade of importance : but at present, we rather refer to those addresses, as records of the sentiments which we are still desirous of sustaining, and of impressing on the minds of all degrees of persons within our church ; in order that we may, at this time, invite your attention to two institutions, which were matured and solemnly established by the late special convention, held in the autumn of the year 1821. We mean the Theological Seminary located in the city of

New York, and the society for Domestic and Foreign Missions, the seat of which is the city of Philadelphia.

Although our more immediate motive to the combining of the two institutions in this address, is, their being coincident in regard to the period of their respective organization ; yet we also consider them as having a bearing on one another. The Theological Seminary may be expected to increase the number of labourers in the Lord's vineyard ; and it is owing to deficiency in this particular, added to there being so many destitute congregations in the long settled states, that so few have felt the calls of religious ardour, or conceived of it as a duty, to give their personal agency, in extending the influence of religion over states recently organized and settled. There being a central point, around which there will be congregated young men from different sections of the Union, will be a mean, not only of binding to diligence in study, but of the excitement of religious zeal.

For some considerable time, the design of a Theological Seminary wavered between the scheme of its being constituted for the whole Union, and that of its being left entirely to the discretion of any of the authorities in the different dioceses, in which there should be felt competency combined with inclination. The latter principle was favoured by considerations not unworthy of attention, but yielding to the advantages considered as attached to the other scheme of a General Seminary ; which, it is to be hoped, will be more and more developed. It has been thought not likely, that for the purpose of accommodation to sections distant from one another, there could be a sufficient number of dioceses, the schools of which could raise funds adequate to the giving of scope to the talents of professors in the various branches ; and provide, in other respects, for what would be requisite for the supporting of them with reputation and

usefulness. Besides, in proportion to the number of students, there may be expected a correspondent measure of excitement to study, and of information arising from the mutual exchange of sentiment in religious conversation. Under either of these schemes, and within the sphere of such communications, there may arise differences of opinion issuing in controversies, sometimes verging either to the generating of uncharitableness, or to the opening of a door to real or supposed error. If the issue should be the obtruding of dogmas alien from the great truths of religion, and threatening the peace and the orthodoxy of our communion, they will be more likely to be borne down by a board of professors, and by a competent number of trustees, enjoying the confidence of the representative body of the church, than in circumstances under which an equal weight of opinion is not generally to be expected. In cases, more likely to occur, of variety of opinion not endangering the essential interests of religion; and to which, therefore, the exercise of authority should not extend, we suppose—and our opinion on the point is independent of all considerations besides the nature of the subject—that intolerance would be more apt to show its head within a very limited, than within a very enlarged sphere. It were much to be apprehended, that on subjects on which latitude is designedly tolerated by the church, opposite instructions would be the standards of orthodoxy in different places; the opposing parties affirming of their respective sentiments, that they are fundamental.

For these reasons, and for others less prominent, preference has been given to the general plan which has been established by the special convention, and which carries to our minds a great weight of recommendation, from the improvements which have been made by that body, at the cost of the sacrifice of local partialities. We are aware, how-

ever, of the cases which happen of young men, who can be supported under parental roofs, and within the reach of instruction, while their means may be incompetent to distant journeys and residence. The wants of our church are too many and too pressing to permit the discouragement, in reference to the ministry, of any persons possessed of the requisite qualifications, who may have been under the tuition of some learned and pious clergyman of our communion.

From the concerns of the Theological Seminary, we pass to those of the society for Domestic and Foreign Missions. The objects contemplated by it, had engaged the attention of our church, at an early period of its organization. In the year 1789, and in the first convention held after the obtaining of the episcopacy, there was brought forwards and adopted a plan for the carrying of the design into effect, and in some places, there were incipient proceedings under it. So depressed, however, at that time, was the state of our communion generally; and in very many and very large tracts of country, so destitute had the population become of the means of grace, after having formerly enjoyed them agreeably to the ministry and the services of our church; that without intermediate revivals of our institutions, where they had become dormant, there was wanting a sufficient basis on which to construct a machinery, the operation of which might be expected to be felt in districts recently subjected to cultivation, and in large states rising into existence. In the mean while, the field for Christian zeal was continually enlarging, not without exciting deep feeling in our minds for the wants of our distant brethren, but without the prospect, until lately, of undertaking their relief with a sufficient degree of confidence of success.

The time is at last come, when, in the estimation of the representative body of our church, her energies should be put forth for the effectuating of the object. At the meeting

of the directors in the month of May last, there was appointed an executive committee, with limited powers, but competent to the appointing of agents for the obtaining of funds; to be in readiness for the choosing of missionaries at the next annual meeting, determined by the constitution to be coincident with that of the present convention.

The agents of the executive committee have been industrious in the discharge of the duties of their appointments: but although their endeavours have not been without the fruit of pecuniary contributions, paid into the treasury, yet we depend principally on the zeal which they have been the mean of exciting in various places, and on the measures which have been consequently put into operation, with the fairest prospects of success.

Although the success of the executive committee, constituted in May last, has fallen short of their expectations, yet it is partly owing to a cause not to be regretted, because answering the same purpose in other lines of direction—the instituting of missionary societies in several states, in which they had not before existed, for the supply of the wants of destitute districts in the said states respectively. So far as this provision extends, it is proportionably a relief of the general society, and although it is earnestly wished and hoped, that wherever there exists a local society, there will be the concurrence of aid to the object contemplated by the general convention of our church; yet we do not undertake, in regard to any part of the Union, to calculate the comparative weights of the different claims: of which, in every case, the church in question should be considered as the proper judge. Be the determinations on those comparisons what they may, we trust that wherever there may be bestowed benefactions for the sending of missionaries to people destitute of the means of grace, there will not be denied a portion of the benefit to the inhabitants

of those extensive districts who have especial claims from the recency of their settlements, and their distances from the ministry which they look to as legitimate.

Our western brethren stand to us in a relation like that in which the elder states were to our parent church, before the severance of the political tie connecting them: or rather, the community of interest is stronger in the present case, on account of the nearness of neighbourhood. Of the aids which were extended to us, under the excitements of the venerable prelates of that church, there are imperishable records. The bishops of the American church are anxious to follow the honourable example, which has been transmitted to them with the episcopal succession, and they hope that the episcopalians throughout the Union will adopt the measure of showing themselves worthy of the beneficence which was extended to their forefathers, and that they will repay the benefit, not in the quarter from which it came, and where it is neither wanted nor demanded, but to bodies of our fellow-members of the same communion, who possess claims similar to those which we know to have not been made in vain.

It may be a question, whether, in default of this, the vicinity of the old states to the new, do not only not profit the latter, but operate to their loss. In England, there have lately risen societies, some of them composed wholly of members of the established church of that country; and others considerably under the influence of persons of the same description, which extend their Christian beneficence to many and very remote realms. The most distant parts of Asia and of Africa have felt the effects of their zeal. What should prevent their taking of our western settlements under their fostering care? It may be supposed that nothing would prevent it, were applications made, and were supplies despaired of from a nearer source, more reason-

ably looked to. God forbid that so foul a stain should attach to the American church and to her children.

From the tenour of the reasons given in favour of the domestic branch of the Missionary Society, it cannot but appear that we contemplate it as the more prominent object of the institution. We, however, consider the foreign department of it, as not only enjoined on us and on all the members of the church by the terms of the constitution, but to rest on our consciences, as the exaction of Christian charity, and issuing out of the high command—"Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." Other denominations of professing Christians have been before us in this work. Is it, then, that our standards of doctrine, or that our modes of worship, are less worthy of propagation, or less likely to conciliate the understandings or to interest the feeling of persons in the darkness of heathenism? We trust that neither of these is the fact. Why, then, should we be backward to take our share of labour and of expense, in the great field lately opened to the zeal of the Christian world? In regard to bodies of professing Christians, whose principles differ from those of our apostolic church, we respect their zeal, and rejoice in any good which may be achieved by it. But we submit, as a subject of very serious consideration, whether their laudable endeavours may not have a pernicious effect on the credit of our religious institutions, so as to lessen the probability of their being received within any sphere where they may be promulged. For, although we do not concede that zeal is an exact measure of the truth which it may be called forth to propagate, yet there may seem cause to doubt the validity of the tenets, which, not merely from peculiarity of time or of place, but generally, and among a widely-extended population, do not excite to the spreading

of the knowledge of what is supposed to be connected with the highest interests of mankind.

We are not strangers to the inefficiency of many attempts, in former times put forth, for the extending of the religion of the Redeemer: but we detect the principal cause of failure, in the incompatibility of the means with the end. When the sword and the cross have been held in an unnatural union, for the subjecting of nations to crowns having no title to their allegiance, and to a supremacy in the church, having no foundation in the Scriptures, it is not surprising that there should either be generated deadly hatred, or that there should ensue a profession decorated by the name of Christian, but having little else to constitute a title to the character. When attempts have been made under better auspices, and with purity of motive, but under such mistaken views of the subject as to substitute evanescent feeling for "the demonstration of the spirit and of power," that is, evidence of prophecy and of miracle, with which the apostles made their extensive conquests within the former dominion of heathenism, it is no matter of wonder that there should be but little good accomplished, and no lasting effect of that little. It is to be hoped that the time is come when not only a more righteous, but a more intelligent zeal has found its openings, and is in successful progress.

Although we have placed this matter in the second degree of importance, yet we cannot but be of opinion, that there are two claims of the kind, which ought to press on us with great weight. One of them is that which comes from the western coast of Africa, and the other is that which reaches us from our aboriginal neighbours, in the western regions of our continent. It is not enough that we witness increasing conviction and abhorrence of the iniquity of the slave trade. There should be acknowledg-

ment of past error, in energy to be now put forth, for the redeeming of the injured country from idolatry and barbarism. As for the Indians on our borders, it is notorious that besides the frauds sometimes practised, and the wars provoked, for the obtaining of the possession of their lands, the circumstance that the first settlers among them are often of the dregs of our population, has infused into their moral character many poisonous ingredients, to which they were strangers until their intercourse with emigrants from Europe. Shall the time never come, when the injury done and still doing to them, shall receive a counterbalance, in a benefit which could not fail to bind them to us in an everlasting chain of friendship?

If there be any who still contend that the more distant claims should be entirely lost sight of in the contemplation of those who have sprung from the same community with ourselves, let such persons be aware, that there are very many of their fellow-citizens, of the same church with themselves, who, without being insensible of the claims of the nearer duty, are convinced that something also should be done for the accomplishing of the decree of God, "giving to his blessed Son the heathen for his inheritance." With us the question is, whether zeal of this description shall have an opportunity afforded to it, of contributing the stream of its beneficence through the channel of our own church, or shall be poured through some other less acceptable, yet tending to the accomplishment of the object. It would not be unnatural, if, with many, on a comparison of the merits of different systems, the matter now treated of, should turn the balance to our disadvantage.

While we press on the attention of the members of our church the interests of two institutions, in the success of which, as we conceive, her reputation, her increase, and her usefulness very much depend; we are sensible of the

merits of several other species of association, which, of late years, within her bounds, as within those of other societies, have been formed with the view of cherishing and of extending religious belief and practice. Such are Sunday Schools, societies for the distributing of the Bible, of the Book of Common Prayer, of the Homilies, and of instruction in the form of tracts, suited to ordinary apprehension. Although we avoid enlarging on the merits of the expedients thus adopted for the furtherance of piety; and to which we have given our aid in our respective dioceses; it is not from a diminished opinion of their importance: since we still contemplate them as entering into the ground-work of what is represented in the Apocalypse, under the image of "an angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and tongue, and kindred, and people." But instead of enlarging on these topics, we rather, at this time, call the attention to the source from which they have issued—the excitement in late years given to the public mind, prompting the expedients which have been devised for the evangelizing of the world.

It is not many years ago, when infidelity was seen waving high her standard; first erecting it in the old world, and glorying in the prospect of the extirpation of the name of Christ from under heaven. Who would have believed, if it had been foretold, that the providence of God was then laying a train of causes, which should speedily end in successful expedients for the extending of the religion of the Gospel, wherever commerce unfurls her flag, and wherever political interests open the door of communication of one nation with another? not only this, but that in countries professing Christianity, with apathy to the spiritual wants of the lower orders of society, the time was now come, when in every cottage, and in every hovel, so far as endeavours

can accomplish, there shall be the book which contains the glad tidings of salvation? and even not these things only; but that for the giving of the greater effect to its inestimable contents, there shall, if possible, be none advancing to the age of maturity, without having this treasure unlocked to their perusal by ability to read? Such are the plans of the moral government of God, by which he verifies the saying indited under the inspiration of His Spirit, "Surely, the wrath of man shall praise thee."

It was not in the old world only, that infidelity had spread its poison, in every department of politics, of science, and of manners; threatening ruin to our institutions in their infancy; which it were folly to think to sustain, under its demoralizing influence. That the friends of religion should mourn over the increasing epidemic, was to be expected. But, in addition, all friends of social order have been alarmed at the prospect of the gulf to which they saw the public mind advancing. The effect is the conviction, that the interests of time, even if those of eternity be put out of view, demand the retracing of the steps. That in addition to this, many have been drawn to a serious weighing of the things which belong to their peace, is evident in an increased regard to the ordinances of religion, among all denominations of professing Christians; and in a growing concurrence in all promising endeavours for the extending of the kingdom of the Redeemer. We may perceive the operation of this spirit, in the many societies formed for the increase of religious knowledge: and were no such societies to be seen among us, the same fact would be established by the mass of Bibles, which, of late years, have been printed and sold with a view to honourable gain—in number far beyond proportion to the increase of population, great as it unquestionably is. In these events, we may perceive a crisis, similar to that which drew from our Saviour the saying—

“Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest.”

Brethren, we consider the excitement noticed, as adding immense weight to the obligation always lying, of our contributing in our several spheres, to the extending of the influence of true religion. For although there are never wanting opportunities to this effect, yet they especially abound when the spirit of inquiry is awake, and when there are appearances of a verifying of the promises of God in Scripture. These promises will be fulfilled ; but it will be by the mean of human agency ; and it is the province of religious wisdom, to mark the seasons of sensibility, and to suit its efforts to the occasions.

On the clergy in particular, we make the call to put forth their zealous exertions, in reference, not only to the point the last pressed, but to all the matters comprehended in this address : and while we wish the admonition to be brought home with power to our own hearts, we entreat the prayers of all orders of persons in this church, for our having of wisdom to discern, and grace to execute, whatever may conduce to her spiritual welfare, and to the glory of her Divine Head.

Signed by order of the House of Bishops,

WILLIAM WHITE, Presiding Bishop.

Philadelphia, May 26th, 1823.

PASTORAL LETTER No. VII.

FROM THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL
CHURCH, ASSEMBLED IN GENERAL CONVENTION AT PHILA-
DELPHIA, NOVEMBER, A. D. 1826.

BRETHREN,

BEING again assembled in general convention, with the clerical and lay deputies of the different dioceses of our church, we again address you, as required by the 45th canon of 1808.

It is a subject of mutual congratulation among us, and the result of communications to one another of the concerns under our respective superintendence, that our church continues to be on the increase, in proportion to the increasing population of our common country. We also learn, that in various vicinities in which our services had been for many years disused, and the voices of our ministry had been unheard, there is a revival of them, under agencies rendered effective by the good Providence of God; and, as we trust, under the holy influences of his Spirit. In many other places not yet supplied, there appears to have been cherished a preference for the principles of our communion, under a severance which had been produced by events originating in the change of political relations: this having been the result of causes which no human sagacity could

have either foreseen or governed. Further, these sources of satisfaction are unalloyed by any known dangers, threatening material injury to the peace and the brotherly regards which have distinguished our church from the time of its organization to the present day.

It is a great deduction from the satisfactory view now taken, that in some of the new states in the west and in the south, there is not yet heard the voice of a minister of our communion in her services ; and in extending evangelical truth in connection with her ecclesiastical institutions ; and that, in some other states, there are at least too few to afford any immediate prospect of organizing ecclesiastical bodies within their respective bounds. It is a consolation to us, under this privation, that during the present session of the representative body of our church, there has been communicated to them the intelligence of the organizing of our church in the State of Mississippi ; which has accordingly been received by us as a branch of our ecclesiastical union.

On these triennial occasions of addressing you, there has been, to a certain extent, a sameness in what we had to offer ; that is, so far as concerns a persevering adherence to the pure and holy religion of the Gospel ; and, as explanatory of it, to the doctrines of our church, as set forth in her articles ; to her services, as seen in her Book of Common Prayer ; and to the illustrating of both in holy life and conversation ; of which there is no grade not encouraged and cherished by the whole body of our institutions.

Notwithstanding this sameness of our addresses in a degree, there has always been a mixture of variety, resulting from circumstances appropriate to the several times ; and adjudged by us to give weight to lessons, which are proper to all times and places. Such a circumstance now occurs to us, in our having lately witnessed the elation of the pub-

lic mind, at the period which stamped the duration of half a century, on the existence of our commonwealth. It is a tract of time which has been fruitful of great events, and on which we cannot look back, without sensibility in reference to the concerns of our church in the various scenes through which she has passed ; nor without noticing the improvement which may be made of them. In this retrospect we review the gloomy prospects by which our church was clouded, because of her being identified in public opinion with a government from which she was now to be for ever severed, the state in which she continued for many years, destitute of the provisions essential to the succession of her ministry ; her subsequent manifesting of herself in a new form, with uncertainty as to the result of measures dictated by the exigences of her new condition, but of which we could have no assurance of success, although there was humble hope of it in the promises of the Saviour to his mystical body, wherever seated ; and added to all this, the more agreeable considerations of the success of the measures adopted, and a consequent increase and prosperity, at least equal to any expectations which had been entertained by us.

It is a wise improvement of the transactions which pass on the great theatre of life, when they incite us to look up to the control of them in the Providence of God. In so doing, we shall often discern the accomplishment of events, not only beyond the designs, but even in contradiction to the wishes of the agents. This opens to us a magnificent view of the Divine economy. We behold a vast compass in its plans ; and must be convinced, that be the immediate mover of any measures who he may, there is an invisible sceptre of moral rule too weighty for any other hands than those of a Being of infinite knowledge ; who comprehends the whole series of the events intended by him ; who connects them

in a chain, of which the smallest link is as necessary as the greatest; who traces the dependence of each effect on its cause from the beginning, and through whatever is to intervene, to the remotest distance, and final issue; who keeps before him the extent of created nature, with the minutest incidents, as well of the material as of the intellectual world; and who thus fills and governs all things.

After having thus looked back on the past, we find ourselves encouraged to look forward to the future; although not as imagining, that we are authorized to presume, from any existing circumstances, that the end will be such as our imperfect judgments may infer. Against this there are many objections; of which it is not the least, that men are led to approve of evil, under the expectation that God is making it the mean of good. This, however, ought not to hinder us from contemplating any present state of affairs, in relation to what may be believed to be its effects in future; so far as may be concluded from the observation and the experience of former times, and by correct reasonings from causes existing before our eyes.

Under the operation of this sentiment, we are encouraged, not presumptuously to affirm, but modestly to conjecture, as to what may be the Divine design, in the peculiar circumstances under which these states were settled, and have since grown to eminence among the nations of the earth; and in this anticipation we engage, with the view of making it instrumental to duties, which it is the design of this address to set before you.

In endeavouring to look beyond the veil that conceals futurity from our view, different minds will be more or less sanguine, according to their different temperaments and habits of thought. As the subject is seen by many, and among them by those who now address you; when we consider the magnitude of the event which has given a new

world, as it were, for the accommodation of the human race; and when we trace, in the experience of past ages, that nothing but the possession of civil liberty, with its endearments, could have brought this part of the American continent to its present state of cultivation and of prosperity, we cannot but perceive, in this event, the counsels of the great Being, "who doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth."

We may, therefore, build our hopes on the foundation, that the use and the benefit of mankind were the object of Divine Providence in bringing the land which we inhabit within the reach of intellectual improvement and civilization. But God, in the accomplishment of his purposes, acts, by the instrumentality of second causes, and in this great work renders as well the faculties of the human mind, as the laws which he has assigned to matter, subservient to his will. Now it is only in a state of civil happiness that those powers are competent to the effecting of an object like that contemplated. It is not by the subjects of despotic sway, insecure in their possessions, and liable in their persons to the capricious will of their rulers, that the rough bosom of nature can be made to disclose its treasures. No, it is civil and religious freedom, with the *sécurité* and the incentives which it supplies, that must brace the nerves and keep alive the hopes of hardy industry. It is this which, making the peasant rejoice in his hopeful offspring, and in the certainty that he is labouring for himself and for them, must tempt him to brave the hardships and the dangers of the wilderness, and to hew out for himself a possession in its recesses.

What a prospect does this consideration open to our view! As the Chaldean seer, surveying the Israelitish camp, and having an insight into futurity, exclaimed with wonder—"Who can count the dust of Jacob, or number a fourth part

of the tribes of Israel?" we may ask—Who can count the numbers to be hereafter sustained by a cultivation, of which the present is no more than the beginning? Who can have a conception of the fields laden with harvests, which shall succeed to our immeasurable deserts, and of the cities which, in centuries to come, shall adorn the banks of our innumerable lakes and rivers? Or who can form an idea of the extent of useful arts, which, throughout this new field of ingenuity and of labour, shall be set at work for the adding to the stock of human comfort? Here is an object worthy of the great Being who sways the sceptre of the universe, and whose providence is thus illustrated in verifying what is declared of him in his word—"The earth hath he given to the children of men."

While we thus rejoice in an increasing culture, we may anticipate the same advantages as alluring to our shores the excess of distant population, by which so many exchange indigence and obscurity for easy and plentiful subsistence, and in some instances, for wealth and eminence. If from encouragements thus produced by demands for labour, and by the liberal genius of our constitutions, there should be the danger of being infested by the discontented and the desperate of other climes, every abuse of this sort may be guarded against by salutary regulations, while there will be an overbalance in the rewards which virtuous industry will secure, and in the aids which, from whatever region it may be transplanted, cannot but be brought along with it to the public weal. They who now possess the soil, or are the most distinguished among us by their services or by their talents, are generally the descendants from persons who left the old world, for the better prospects thought to open on them in the new. It will not be hazardous to predict, that for a long course of time to come, there will be the like allurements and the like success. While this shall continue

every benevolent mind will rejoice in the public legislation, in proportion as it shall protect the worthy emigrant in his peaceful industry, and as it shall deprive the unworthy of the means to disturb and to overthrow.

Above all, and what is the most pertinent to the present purpose, we may consider as connected with the views of Providence in the progress of American improvement, that there will be a greater diffusion of the Gospel, with all its invaluable benefits. We cannot but expect, that, with a growing population, there will be a progressive enlargement of the sphere of the revelation which "has brought life and immortality to light." The advancement of our holy religion will probably continue, as it has been heretofore, gradual, but sure. Ages may roll away, and empires may rise and fall, before there shall come the promised era, when "all the kingdoms of the world shall be the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ." But, as we rest our expectations of that event on the rock of his never-failing promise, we have reason to rejoice in whatever promotes the accomplishment of it, by extending the profession of Christianity over the immeasurable wilds of this immense continent. Blessed religion! which heightens the pleasures and assuages the sorrows of life, which animates to the discharge of present duties, and opens to the view the prospect of a happy immortality, and which is the guardian of civil happiness, in the sanctions brought by it to every branch of social justice and beneficence. May its radiance continue to extend itself over these western regions, until they shall everywhere be covered by a population enjoying the full splendour of Gospel day! In the mean time may we all have our minds open to the light of revealed truth! May we look to it, not only as the inspirer of private virtue, but as the best security of social order, which, without

its powerful aids, will be lost in a general profligacy of manners !

In proof of this, and to show the benign influence of our holy religion in contrast with its opposite, it is but to look back to a period not very distant, when the dark cloud of infidelity obscured for a while the bright prospect of the spread of Gospel truth, discharging itself in a profusion of misery and of crime, and threatening the overthrow of religion in all its forms. The result is, that the evil has been overruled to good by the moral Governor of the world ; the crisis having awakened throughout Christendom new energies, brought into operation with a zeal and in an extent not witnessed since the earliest ages of the Gospel, and the force of which is at this moment felt in every quarter of the globe.

Nothing can tend more effectually to this than the recollection of the deadly foe who has been mentioned, and of the bitter fruit of the tree which had been planted by his hand, than its effects on human happiness, personal, domestic and civil, than the observing that it lessens the obligations of good faith between man and man, that it diminishes the sanctity of oaths, that it destroys every appearance of honour, except the name of it, serving for the covering of crimes, that it prevents industry among the poor, and promotes licentiousness among the rich, that it has destroyed families, and has threatened to destroy the state. These are evils resulting from infidelity as surely as any effect from its proper cause. There seems reason to hope, that the connection will be more and more perceived and felt, and that all friends of moral order and of social happiness will be convinced that there is no security for them, but in the profession of religion and the practice of its duties, the restraints of which are thus demonstrated to be as necessary for life as its consolations are for death. When religion is

upheld in this important point of view, that of Christ and none other must be in contemplation, because it is evident of all who abandon it, that none other is made a substitute; which is proof that it is deserted from no other cause than that of repugnancy to its holy requisitions.

Even in the enthusiasm so captivating to weak minds, and which, from the want of rational instruction, has overspread a great proportion of our country, we may perceive evidence how small the prospect is of the permanent success of infidelity in its endeavours to divest religion of her government over mankind. From the fact stated, it appears that this powerful agent, when expelled from the dominion in which she has a right to reign, rallies, and reassumes her empire, manifesting her native strength even in the extravagances to which, through the weakness of human nature, her salutary influence is misapplied. It is far from being designed to advocate the errors either of enthusiasm or of superstition, but, without the hazard of this there may be the acknowledgment, that neither of them has an influence so fatal to human virtue and human happiness as the entire absence of religion, which leaves men "without God in the world," which allows of no motive to good morals, but such as is at the mercy of changing interest and humour, which deprives sorrow of all its consolations, and which has no hope in death, except the vain one of the extinction of our being.

We may, therefore, indulge the hope—and the uncertainty of human affairs permits no more—that the morning of prosperity risen on these states, will be succeeded by a suitable brightness of their noon. If the expectation of this should be realized, it must be by public virtue resting on religious motive, which is so essential to the object, that when it is brought forwards independently of such an asso-

ciation, however intended, the effect will be to deceive and to destroy.

For the sustaining of both of them in a happy union, we may now go on to develop the duties which are the obvious results of the review made of the past.

The first duty to be proposed is that of gratitude for our having been born under the light of the Gospel, disclosing the plan of the Divine counsels from the beginning to the end of time ; assuring of an expiation for sin, and of the forgiveness of it if repented of and forsaken ; furnishing the most efficient aids for holy living, prescribing an unerring rule of life and manners, and opening to our prospect a state of never-ending happiness.

To add to the inestimable value of this best gift of God to man, there is the circumstance of an unrestrained admission to the source of truth in the Divine word without having it forced on us through the medium of the interpretation of fallible men. Attendant on all, there is the privilege of worshipping God agreeably to the dictates of our consciences, without civil restrictions, or the apprehension of civil penalties.

This part of the subject might be shown to advantage, by a contrast of our condition with that of a great proportion of our fellow men in various countries, in which these mercies of Providence are unknown, and all would tend to the practical lesson, that “to whom much is given, of them there will be much required;” that in proportion to our information of religious truth and duty, will be the guilt of that abandonment of God, which leaves in the conduct no trace of the acknowledgment of his being, except, perhaps, in a profanation of his great name ; and not only this, but where apostacy is not to such an extreme, which causes at least an indifference to religion, inconsistent, so far as any person is himself concerned, with his being a subject

of the covenant of grace, and so far as the world is concerned, with every pretension to the property of the Christian character, which consists in the "letting of our light so shine before men," as that they may be "led by it to glorify our Father who is in heaven."

Combined with devout gratitude for this best of all benefits, there should be a due estimate of the civil institutions under which we enjoy security of property and of person, with thankfulness to the Giver of this and "of every other good and perfect gift." Here is the spring of the most animating incentives to honest industry, encouraging to sustain the social relations dependent on it. In this respect, also, the importance of the subject is increased by an extension of our view to the inhabitants of other climes, strangers to, or possessing in a much lower degree, the genial influence of immunity from the oppression of power, and a partial administration of justice. If we be sensible of our felicity in this particular, not only does the benefit create a debt of gratitude to the great Bestower of it, but this is essential to its continuance. Of all the gifts of Heaven, there is no one which the laws of the moral world will less endure than that of political freedom. Power in the hands of an individual, and the same in the hands of a privileged few, has been often abused, yet long retained. But such is the nature of popular abuse of freedom, that in all ages the corrective of the enormity has been generally unrelenting despotism. To suppose that freedom will escape abuse among a people over whose passions religion has no considerable control, is inconsistent with what the whole history of the world attests. Accordingly, the subject furnishes us with occasion to pray for the increase of the influence of the religious principle over all classes of our fellow-citizens; and especially over those who are called to offices of high authority and trust, and of imploring for them the guidance

of the grace of God, to the end that, as he has declared the fear of himself to be "the beginning of wisdom," or the spring or origin of whatever deserves the name, they who rule may not leave this out of the account, in their labours for the public happiness, which, without it, may be a fabric splendid for a little while, but without a foundation, and therefore without permanency.

We wish to apply all the considerations which have been presented to the extension of the bounds of the visible body, to which are committed the preservation and the increase of the knowledge of Gospel truth ; to be aimed at by each of us in his proper sphere ; and in proportion to the means which have been bestowed on him, and to the opportunities which have been furnished to him by Providence. We may perceive great incitement to this in the high character sustained by that communion, and in the properties with which it has been arrayed in the word of truth. It is there called "The kingdom of God ;" "the body and the spouse of Christ ;" "a building raised on the foundation of the holy apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone ;" and "a household," the concerns of which he administers by his commissioned servants. It had been prophesied of in much earlier times, as "a gathering of the people unto Shiloh," or a special messenger, who should be sent ; as "the Lord's house, to be established on the top of the mountains," into which there should be a "flowing of all nations ;" as "a dominion," which was to be extended "from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth ;" and as "a stone cut out without hands," which should "become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth."

What though there may be discouragement to many in the errors and in the wickedness, by which this divinely constituted body has been dishonoured in different times and

places. Still there is the promise of its Founder, that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," meaning by its extermination; and as to the dishonour done to it by the excitements of wicked passions, the same was clearly announced under the figure of "grain growing in a field until the harvest," and under that of "a net containing fishes good and bad." With this diversity, there continues in its full force the last command of our Saviour to his disciples—"Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

It is of this divinely instituted body, with all the properties in which it has been clothed by its adorable Ordainer, that we exhort you to interest yourselves in the extension of the sphere of influence; and if, in our plea in its behalf, we combine the subject with a special regard to the discriminating institutions of the church of which we profess ourselves members, it is not from sectarian zeal, nor from undue estimation of what rests on the will of man, but because there must be some defined shape in which religious doctrine is to be promulgated, and in which religious services are to be performed. Whatever other provisions there may be for the purpose, those obtaining among us are the most sanctioned by our judgments, and the most cherished by our affections, and in both these respects, as the most agreeable to the Holy Scriptures; and we cannot abandon this ground without subjecting our communion to the intrusion of many pernicious errors, fabricated by the erring imaginations of men.

In adverting to a few particulars for the accomplishment of the object of this address, we give the prominent place, not only because of its pre-eminent importance, but because of its being essential to whatever may afterwards occur, to the ultimate use of religious instruction, in its promoting of personal piety, and suitable rectitude of conduct. The great end for which the Gospel, "bringing salvation to all men,

hath appeared," is, "that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they may live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world." Here is a summary of duty not to be detracted from without great sin, and not admitting addition from any fanciful ideas of a greater elevation and perfection of the Christian character. We are aware that there may be the form, that is, the spacious appearance, of godliness, without the power of it over the wayward passions of our nature; that there may be acts, by which the righteousness of the inward man should be made manifest to the world; while, severed from their proper character, they may be made equally subservient to temporal interest and reputation, and that there may be an abstaining from licentiousness, made subservient to health, to decorum, and to various advantages proper to the present state of being; while it may be "a whitened sepulchre," covering "rottenness within." Considering these things as far short of the holy morality of the Gospel, we exhort you to the attainment of the graces which will accompany you beyond a world which you behold constantly passing away from you; and to the being of a cast of character, which will elevate you from a membership of Christ's church militant on earth, to be members of the church triumphant in heaven, and to join in the song which is "sung day and night before the throne" of the Eternal.

In thus sustaining the cause of Christian morals, let us be equally tenacious of their foundation in Christian faith; that is, in the leading and essential doctrines of Christianity, which are never abandoned or held in light esteem, without proportionable injury to the other. It is not an unusual way of inducing an undervaluing of both, to give ample praises to Christianity as a moral code, connected with a disparaging representation of its doctrines as matters of speculation. So partial a consideration of the subject is the

losing sight of man as a sinner, in that character as needing mercy, which nothing but Divine beneficence can extend to him, and which can be had only on the terms proposed to him in the Scriptures, through the meritorious sacrifice of the cross, offered in a nature both divine and human; further, as a being destitute of his original perfection, to which he can no otherwise be restored than by the grace of God giving a beginning to holy affections in him, and working with him when in possession of them; in addition to this, as in his best estate subject to frailties which cannot but issue in sins, unless prevented by “a strength made perfect in natural weakness;” and to consummate the view of him, as a transitory being, to be in the world but a little while, knowing that the day of life will soon terminate, without the certainty of a state beyond the grave other than what is bottomed on “the life and immortality brought to light by the Gospel.” These are truths, independently of which we consider moral theory as at best a dressing of decorum to the character, but more generally as too feeble for the resistance of even an ordinary measure of temptation.

While we thus exhort to what we consider as of the most prominent importance—personal piety, manifested by a religious life and conversation; and with this, correct views of the dispensation of grace; we would not lose sight of the mean of upholding the important object, by a visible profession, and by habitual attendance on all the offices of our holy religion. Our Lord has stamped on the community of his followers the character of “a city set on a hill, which cannot be hid,” and of “a candle set not under a bushel, but on a candlestick,” that its light may be visible and of use. You need but look around you to remark how much the disuse of the worship of the sanctuary is followed by deterioration of morals; and how much this tends to the temporal as well as to the spiritual injury of many who

are prominent in the social system ; and to the corruption of the lower classes of society, by example descending to them from the more elevated. When St. Paul exhorts the Hebrew Christians—"Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is," it appears, by attention to the general drift of the epistle, in respect to the intimated fault, that it was not without there having been a proportionate departure from the integrity of the Christian profession, endangering there being in them "an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." In like manner, whenever, in any vicinity of our extensive country, there has been discontinuance of social worship and of the sound of the preached Gospel, the effect has been felt in the ruin of individuals and of families ; in excesses of political contention ; and even in the decay of the courtesies of life. This should suggest to others, whose delinquency is counteracted by better habits, not yet borne down by the corrupt example which they are presenting to the public for imitation, that but for this, the whole political body would be covered by an ulcerating sore, tending to its entire putrefaction ; and that, therefore, there may be profitably addressed to them the admonition in the epistle which has been referred to—"Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God."

While we are thus attentive to the cultivation of religious affection, not only as a principle in the mind, but as venting itself in external acts of homage, let us not be regardless of those of the fellow-members with us of the body of Christ, who are so situated as to be destitute of the means of grace. This is the condition of the population in many of the districts of the United States. In some instances, the privation extends to the extreme, of their being without the sound of the preached Gospel. If, in other instances, the

want is limited to the being without the edifying services of our church, to which they give a preference, in consequence of education or of inquiry, we ought surely to consider the case, as coming under the figurative language of the apostle—"If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." And while, in the exercise of Christian beneficence of this description, we give a marked preference to a church which we believe to be the most congenial to the character stamped by our Saviour on his acknowledged mystical body—its being "built on the foundation of the holy apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone,"—it is a line of conduct which may be pursued without hostility to any denomination professing the truth as it is in Jesus; but, on the contrary, consistently with respect towards them, and with gratitude to Almighty God for any good which, under the operation of his grace, they may have been the instruments of achieving.

We consider it as not irrelative to the object of this address, but, on the contrary, as a fair inference from the argument of it, that the members of our communion throughout the United States should be invited to take a reasonable part in the prodigious efforts now put forth for the evangelizing of the world. The sending of the Bible on the errand for which there has been so often the instrumentality of the sword; the going of missionaries, with the message of the Gospel in their mouths, and not as heretofore, with the armour of penal law; and the extending of the dominion, not of some earthly conqueror, or of a power described in the Apocalypse "with two horns like a lamb, and speaking like a dragon;" but of the cross, with the more congenial accompaniments of "peace and good will to men;" give the promise of a degree of success, to which the opposite means have been found as inefficient, as they were destitute of any authority from the Scriptures.

We cannot be on this subject, without recommending to the members of our communion the claims of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, instituted by a former general convention; and hitherto conducted with an efficiency proportioned to its means, but not to the magnitude of the object, or in comparison of what has been done by some other religious denominations, who have put forth powerful energies for the accomplishing of the same design. We are aware, that in the most of the dioceses of this union there are local exigences, and that in many of them there have been missionary societies formed, with a view to their supply. Far be it from us to endeavour to stop the sources of contribution to a purpose which must be confessed to have very powerful claims on the beneficence of the several dioceses to which the remark applies. We only plead for an extension of the boon; so that while we pay a special regard to spiritual wants immediately within our knowledge, and under our notice, or the tidings of which are brought to our ears from no distant quarters, we may not be indifferent to the carrying into effect of the original command for the founding of the Christian church—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." It may be seen in the report of this society, now lying before the assembled convention of our church, that among the measures for the accomplishing of the design of their institution, there is that of a permanent missionary establishment, with suitable buildings for a school, and for the accommodation of a family; with a view to the Christianizing of the Indians in the north-west district of the Union. It has committed the society to the incurring of a considerable expense; and although there is reason to expect that a part of this will be borne by the civil government, to the constituted authorities of which our plan has been submitted; yet we shall not be sanguine as to the issue,

without more liberal aid than has yet been furnished from the several dioceses of our church.

What with the destitution of so many fields of labour within the bounds of the United States, and the demands for ministers to carry beyond them the glad tidings of salvation, we have all along felt the want of an increase of the ministry, proportioned to the increase of the calls for them, especially as we are more and more sensible of the inutility of an accession, unless it be of men with the qualification of theological and of other literature. In this respect we hope to be gradually relieved by the seminary instituted under the authority of the general convention, and attested to be ably conducted by those of us who have attended on the annual examinations of its graduates and its pupils. It is a subject of great joy to us, that this seminary, although considerably short of the funds equal to the efficiency to be desired, is so far possessed of them, as, in all human appearance, to secure its permanency. It will receive additional security from there having been erected a convenient and handsome building for the accommodation, as well of professors as of pupils, which will soon be in a condition for the reception of them. We ought not, however, to lose the present opportunity of presenting the seminary, as claiming further contributions from the members of our communion: and as this has been introduced in connection with the subject of an increase of the ministry of our church, we would especially mention the endowing of scholarships, which we anticipate as being an operative expedient, for the bringing into the Gospel field of talents, which, independently of such a source of supply, would be lost, as to any considerable benefit, to the church and to society.

We ought not to conclude this address, without an affectionate entreaty to our brethren of the clergy in particular, to concur with us in the promotion of all the objects which

have been detailed. They and we live at a very eventful period of time; supposed, by many inquirers into the sense of prophecy, to be within its eye in that department of the Apocalyptic vision, in which, after a long series of years of corruption and of darkness, there is seen "an angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel, to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." Whether the bright prospects thus opened on us are to be realized to any now living, or are reserved to more distant times, there is always lying on us the duty of "having our loins girt about, and our lamps burning." It is a low estimate of the ministry to suppose its claims satisfied by an exemption from immorality and from indecorum, or by a round of prescribed performances, without an interest taken in the object of them. It is a life of anxiety and of labour; and there will not be a cessation of them so long as there shall be but partially accomplished the work laid on us in ordination of "doing all that lieth in us, to bring all such as are or shall be committed to our charge, unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left among us either for error in religion, or for viciousness of life." That this may be the object of their and of our endeavours, until we shall be called on to give an account of our respective stewardships, may God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

By order of the House of Bishops,

WILLIAM WHITE, Presiding Bishop.

PASTORAL LETTER No. VIII.

FROM THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL
CHURCH, ASSEMBLED IN GENERAL CONVENTION AT PHILA-
DELPHIA, AUGUST, A. D. 1829.

BRETHREN,

ANOTHER triennial convention furnishes us with the present opportunity of addressing you, agreeably to the requisition of the the 45th canon of 1808.

Under our personal observation, and from the communications presented during the present session from the churches in the several States, we gather abundant proof, that our Zion is "lengthening her cords and strengthening her stakes," in the increase of her ministry, in the number of her congregations, and in that of her professing members. Whether there be a proportionate increase in genuine devotion, and in a walking worthy of the vocation, is a question which exacts a more extensive knowledge of the population of the different districts of our country; and, in some respects, a nearer insight of the hearts of men, than we feel a competency to in ourselves. But here we find sufficient ground on which to build the intimation, that only in proportion to such increase, the prosperity of the church is a fit subject either of desire or of congratulation.

It is with pleasure we contemplate the organizing of our

church in two of the Western States, those of Kentucky and of Tennessee, and the consequent admission of their churches within our ecclesiastical union. In the tide of emigration to the west, there is of course a proportion of the settlers who had inherited from their ancestors a predilection for the principles and for the services of the Episcopal church. They are generally so thinly scattered over extensive countries, only of late brought under cultivation, that for the congregating of them under ecclesiastical ties, there are required, in every case, the energies of at least a few men of information and of influence, to take the lead in incipient measures. Such men have been found in each of the States referred to ; and we indulge the hope, that their example will be followed, even in the more recently settled States and territories.

This object might be much promoted by due encouragement extended to the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, established by our church, and conducted under her auspices. The report of this society has been before the convention, and will be printed on the Journal. We are of opinion, that neither the importance of the institution, nor the difficulties with which it has had to struggle, are generally known. In several of the dioceses there are provisions for missionary purposes within the same. We do not doubt, that in each of them there are calls for ministerial aid to a destitute population within its limits. But there is a far more extensive field within the federal Union, the destitute condition of which makes the most powerful appeal to Christian beneficence. And a disposition is cherished, by many members of our communion, to contribute to the wants of the benighted portions of the world. The constitution of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of our church admits of the appropria-

tion of the contributions and efforts of its members to either of these objects exclusively or to both.

There has been on the society the pressure of the want of missionaries. For a gradual supply of this, we look to the Theological Seminary, existing under the auspices of this convention. Its report has been laid before us, and has exhibited a state of its affairs, which ought to excite an especial interest. In consequence of a most liberal bequest of the late Frederick Kohne, Esq., of Philadelphia, it will be eventually possessed of a very considerable endowment. But, in the mean time, its annual expenditures exceed its annual income, in a sum formidable to the institution, although a light burthen on the church throughout the Union; which it is therefore hoped will respond to the calls lately made on it, for congregational collections in the several churches. From the testimony of those who have attended to the examinations in the seminary, we have no doubt that the education is conducted with ability and with efficiency.

It would contribute materially to the success of the two institutions which have been named, if there should be a general diffusion of measures, lately put in operation in a few of the States, to give gratuitous education for the ministry to pious young men, who may incline to it, but are not furnished with the means of the literary attainments required by the canons. This expedient has pressed on the minds of the clerical and the lay deputies of the convention during the present session; and it is at their desire, that your bishops invite to it the attention of the church at large. Especially they address it to the consciences of pious parents of such youth, exhorting them to avail themselves of the means where they have been provided; not without regard to general fitness of character in their sons, but by fostering the suitable qualifications, where, in the exercise of

Christian judgment, they shall be discerned. In our parent church there are bequests handed down from very ancient times, preparing for usefulness a succession of youth, who otherwise never would have reached it; and this provision has not only been, in some measure, a counterbalance to the scantiness of the provision for a great proportion of her clergy, but has elevated to high standing and to great literary celebrity some whose talents would otherwise have been lost in the obscurity of their parentage. If such an expedient for the bringing of humble merit into useful exercise be adapted to the exigences of the country of our forefathers, much more is it called for by the circumstances of our favoured land, in which there are so many pecuniary rewards of industry, as to require extraordinary exertion, in order to qualify for a department which can never be the road to wealth, or even to what, in other professions, would be considered as competency.

It is with pleasure that, in the reports from a great proportion of our church, we find evidence of a cordial reception of the Episcopal Sunday School Union, which will be eventually the recipient of a large bequest from the same source with that of the Theological Seminary. The institution now noticed, is earnestly recommended by us, as tending to diffuse the knowledge and the practice of the most efficient plans of Sunday School instruction, to moderate the prices of suitable books and tracts, and to protect our Sunday Schools against any endeavours which may hereafter be put forth, to subject them to an influence alien from that of the church.

With grief we notice the vacancy caused in our body, by the decease of the late Rt. Rev. Bishop Kemp. Some of us had, for a long course of years, acted harmoniously with him in the most important concerns of our commu-

nion; which will be prevented, by the melancholy event, from still reaping the fruit of his wise and prudent counsels. In contrast with this privation, this house announces, with satisfaction, that there have been added to their body the Rt. Rev. Henry U. Onderdonk. D.D., Asst. Bishop of the Diocese of Pennsylvania, and the Rt. Rev. Wm. Meade, D.D., Asst. Bishop of Virginia; the latter having been consecrated during the session of this convention.

On every occasion of the issuing of a pastoral letter to the members of our communion, it has been an object with us to avail ourselves of some subject or subjects suggested by the circumstances of the then present time, with a view to application to duties proper to all times, and under any circumstances which may occur. We now continue in this course; and the subject which we bring before you is the religious excitement on the public mind, which has manifested itself within these few years, and continues to extend itself, promoting inquiry into the ground of the faith and of the hopes of the Christian Revelation, and of zealous endeavours for the extension of the knowledge of it.

That such seasons of grace occasionally occur in the course of Divine Providence, cannot have escaped the notice of any religious observer, who has attentively studied the history of the Christian church; and although we are warranted by Holy Writ, to refer every such event to the agency from which "all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works proceed;" yet, it being the usual course of the moral government of God, that his designs are accomplished through the intervention of what are called secondary causes, it is natural to inquire, how far such a provision is discernible in the matter now brought under review.

We think that we perceive the beginning of the series of causes and their effects, in a reaction of the public mind against those prodigious efforts of infidelity which were put

forth within the memory of the most of us, varnished by the most plausible promises of improvement in civil policy, to be built on the ruins of religious profession in all its forms; and even aiming at the impossible achievement of rooting out religious principle, as a delusion operating not to the benefit but to the injury of the human kind. That so corrupt a theory, however contrary to the constitution of our nature, to the history of our race, under all the circumstances in which they have been placed, and to the sentiments of the men who have been held in the highest esteem in different times and places, should be obtruded on the world in the shape of ingenious speculation; and that it should be advocated by splendid talents, and by the misapplication of literary attainments, was not a novelty. But that the phantasm should be a ground of extensive action, that the daring design should be avowed, and committed to the agency of large associations, that it should obtain national adoption any where, that it should be carried into effect by public law, and that a persecuting zeal should be called forth, for the extermination of what had been hitherto considered as the cement of civil society, and as the only security for the rights and for the duties essential to its existence, was a hardihood of iniquity which no experience of former times had given cause to anticipate or to apprehend. It is matter of grief to us, to look back and to recollect, that not only many of the higher grades of life were captivated by the glare of a false philosophy, to their moral loss, but that masses of men in humble life, who had been hitherto out of the reach of the subductive arts of infidelity, together with the shock sustained on their principles, felt the effects of it in their domestic relations, and on the industry which their several vocations called for.

With this dark display before us, we had the consolation to remark, that besides the poignant sorrow which filled the

minds of all who cherished the veneration and the love of what was represented by the divine Author of our religion under the figure of "the pearl of great price," and under that of "a treasure hid in a field," deserving and exacting "the selling of all for the purchase of it;" there were not a few who, contemplating the crisis as big with danger to whatever is estimable in the social system, and as threatening the destruction of all law and of all order, drew back from the gulf laid open before them, and contributed their respective energies to the sustaining of Christian truth as their only sure support. We do not doubt, that from this cause much benefit has been derived to civil society, in the strengthening of the obligation of Christian morals. This was important in its consequences to the social system, while, in the cases of no small a proportion of persons operated on to the effect, and in the more beneficial result of the drawing of their attention to the only foundation of public happiness in the influence of the religious principle, they have confessed the aids derived from those sacred Oracles which have "brought life and immortality to light."

That there has been felt, on the public mind, the reaction thus described, we hold to be a fact, to be appealed to with confidence; and further, we think we cannot be mistaken in the persuasion, that as in all times and places there are evidences of what we read in Scripture—"he maketh the wrath of man to praise him," the truth of the saying is verified in what we notice, that there has been diffused, as well in our combined commonwealth as generally in the kingdoms and the states of the old world, an extraordinary degree of attention to the importance of the Christian revelation—prompting measures for the impressing of its truths, and for the extending of the knowledge of them over the whole habitable world.

For the truth of the fact we refer for evidence of it, to

what continually passes under our observation in the ordinary intercourses of society ; and if this should be thought of not sufficient amount for the argument built on it, we refer for further evidence, to the numerous associations instituted, not only for the continuing and for the extending of the knowledge of divine truth, among the proportion of our population with whom it might otherwise be superseded by increasing ignorance and irreligion, but for the sending of the same precious treasure to all the countries in which it has been hitherto unknown, including many which modern discovery has laid open to missionary zeal. In judging from what we have witnessed, there can be no rashness in the anticipation, that an important effect is about to be produced, as well on countries in which the word of God has been hitherto or until lately unpreached, as on other countries in which its truths have been encumbered, through ages, with traditionary superstition, fastened on the minds of the population by the withholding of the Bible from their perusal. It is to the duties which result from this state of the public mind, that we are desirous of leading your attention.

The shape in which it the most immediately addresses its instructions to every individual, is in the reminding of him or of her, of there being, in this circumstance, a call more frequent and more loud than in ordinary times, to every attainment and to every act, entering into the character, and constituting a part of the conduct of a Christian. We are at all times called to this by the events occurring in the ordinary course of Divine Providence. But when the truths, the obligations, and the hopes of religion have become considerably the subjects of social conversation ; and when an increasing interest is seen to be taken, by the illustration of them in very many instances of the conversion of sinners, and of conspicuous examples of holy conduct, and in incitements, not only to the open profession of Christian obliga-

tion, in opposition to irreligion and immorality of every sort, but to the bestowing of reasonable portions of our worldly substance for the support of the Gospel within our respective spheres of influence, and to carry into effect the charge of its blessed Author,—“Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature;” it is evident, that in each of the circumstances stated, there must be correspondent duty laid on those who are witnesses of it, and an increase of weight to the summons—“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

Our Lord has compared his professing followers to “a city set on a hill, where it cannot be hid,” and to “a candle put not under a bushel, but on a candlestick, where it may give light to all that are in the house.” Doubtless, there is pertinency in these figures to the responsibilities under which professors lie at all times; but the application of them is more than ordinarily conspicuous, when, in consequence of such an increase of attention to the city and to the candle, there is the more readiness of discovery and of remark, in the former case of any dilapidation of the building, and in the latter, of any dusky matter which may communicate its vitiating properties to the blaze. To drop the metaphors: the senses of them apply especially to a point of time, in which, on the one hand, delinquency gives the most occasion of the pouring of contempt on the profession, and on the other hand, the discharge of duties the most illustrative of the precept of our Saviour explanatory of his comparisons—“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

It will be to the purpose, that while we present to the members of our church our views as to what is consistent in their characters as individuals, we exhort them further, that the holy unction of their private devotions may shed its sanctifying influence on the occasions of their assembling

for the public worship of the sanctuary. Perhaps there are few more powerful causes of the excitement of religious affections, than the witnessing of their possessing of the minds of a congregation, in connection with all the decorum, and with whatever else should be connected with the purpose of there being assembled. It has sometimes happened, that on being present at such an exhibition, men who came to mock, remained to pray. This was the sentiment in the mind of St. Paul, when he thought it probable of an unbeliever, that with such a company before him, he should "fall down and worship, and report that God is among them of a truth." If with such persons such may be the result, much more powerful must be the operation of the same cause on those who, on the like occasions, bring with them conviction of the obligation of the attendant duties, but associated with sensibility of the infirmities which may intervene between their devout oblations and the adorable object to whom they are to be addressed.

With a view to the duties referred to, let there be a conscientious hallowing of that sacred day, which, although divested of the peculiarities of the Sabbath, now succeeded by the Lord's Day, ascends, for the source of its obligation, to the command given to the first created pair, when on the finishing of the work of creation, "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Let it rest on the minds of all, as a matter not to be dispensed with, except for some work either of necessity or of mercy. Let them assemble habitually, and in a manner remote alike from levity and ostentation; and let them engage in the prescribed services, with affections suited to the spirit diffused throughout them, in the act of confession, in that of praise and thanksgiving, in that of intercession, and in that of prayer, in all its various breathing of devout desire, with dependence on the Holy Spirit of grace, so as

to render them, as nearly as is consistent with human frailty, fit for the replenishing of "the golden vials, full of odours," defined to be "the prayers of the saints," and said to be "offered by four-and-twenty elders, to the Lamb and before the throne."

On these occasions, let there also be a listening, with desire of profit, and with prayer for the same, to the instructions of the Divine word read from the desk, which, according to the language of Scripture, is preaching in the strict sense;* although not without regard to further instructions from the pulpit, which, when drawn from the Word of God, or constructed in agreement with it, is a mean of salvation ordained by Divine wisdom, and has, in all ages, been efficacious to the conversion of sinners, to the edification of the godly, and to the advancing of the church to what it ought to be as "built on the foundation of the holy apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."

Conceiving of ourselves as addressing persons whose minds wear the impress of the truths of God's holy Word we should be wanting to our subject were we to neglect to intimate to them, that besides personal religion, and besides the profession of it in the services of the church, there are due from the professor, his endeavours to recommend the holy cause in the ordinary intercourses of society. Without a Christian's exhibiting of himself in the character of a dictator, or in that of a censor, there will occur occasions of

* The term "preaching," is never used in the New Testament except as referring to the annunciation of Divine Truth simply, and not extending to any discourse on it merely human. In Acts xx. 9, the translation should have been—as Paul was long discoursing: this being the sense of the Greek *διαλεγομενου*. The Greek for preaching is *κηρυσσα*. In Acts xv. 2, the reading of the Jewish Scriptures in the synagogues is called preaching.

compliance with the apostolic injunction—"be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." Without the obtrusion of sacred lessons on reluctant minds, there may be given such a cast to what is said, as to make it conformable to that other direction of the same apostle—"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt"—with the salt of religious sentiment, in proportion as there may be an opening for the expressing of it. To this there is a great encouragement in that saying of the Old Testament—"a word spoken in due season, how good is it!"—good in itself, and often a mean, under the agency of the Holy Spirit, of illustrating the saying of St. James—"He that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways hath saved a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

We would not press the obtrusion of religious opinion, under circumstances not favourable to the object in view, much less, the doing of this with either matter or manner that will be repulsive, and may, perhaps, carry with it the appearance of self-importance. But when infidelity and irreligion are so little under the restraint even of the decorum which should govern in all social intercourse, and so prone to bring forward their deceptive reasonings and their unhal- lowed wit, whatever offence may be given to those with whom the Christian cause is the dearest object of their affections, it cannot but be covered with dishonour by an indifference on their part, which would wear the appearance of an abandonment of it. We are aware that silence may sometimes be imposed by modesty, under the consciousness of the want of preparation for argument, perhaps exacting the meeting of irreligious men, on the ground of the misapplied stores of literature of various kinds. Even in such a case, if the Gospel have been to the hearer

“the power of God unto salvation,” there are various ways of manifesting his adherence to the integrity of his profession, as also his sense of the attack made on his morals, and of the endeavours put into operation for the blasting of his most precious hopes.

We ought to be aware, that in promoting the cause of religion we are bound to take an interest in it beyond the spheres in which we move, either as individuals or as associated members of congregations. In our political Union there are very few states, if any, in which there are not districts of so sparse a population, and of such comparative poverty, as admit little probability of their being furnished with the preaching of the word and the administration of the ordinances, unless aided by the co-operation of those who possess the advantages of greater numbers, of more favourable opportunities of counsel, and of sufficiency of means. To no case can there more aptly apply the intimation of St. Paul, that “the members of the body should have the same care one for another,” and that “if one member suffer all the members should suffer with it.” In various vicinities of the character alluded to, there is rising a generation without any visible mean of instruction in the most essential truths of religion, or of the practice of any of its duties, and we are warranted by facts, partly gathered from observation, and partly resting on credible testimony, to affirm, that the result of such a state of things is progressive dissoluteness of manners, and even disregard of the decencies of life. In several of the states there are societies, and we doubt not the number of them will increase, instituted for the purpose of meeting the growing evil, and while we pray for success to their labours, proportioned to the demand for them in the necessities of the church, and in the condition of society at large, we cannot refrain from holding up as what should press on the consciences of all

the members of our communion, the duty of furnishing to such bodies their pecuniary contributions, in measures suited to the means which a gracious Providence has bestowed.

There is a larger field for Christian labour and beneficence within the bounds of the federal Union. To the West are the immense regions on the rivers Mississippi and Missouri, and on their tributary streams, in which, within the memory of man, there has been the beginning and an unexampled increase of population, progressing to a point at which, to present appearances, they will contain a mass of inhabitants equal to that of many combined kingdoms and states of the old world. South of the states recognized in our ecclesiastical constitution, there is an extent of country consisting of recent acquisitions of our federal legislature. And to the north-west, there is another of great extent, inviting our attention, not only by a gradual increase of emigrants from the original members of the Union, but by giving access to what remain of the sons of the forest, the descendants of the original possessors of the North-American soil, and affording the opportunity of making some amends for the feebleness of the efforts hitherto put forth to extend to them the blessings of Christianity and of civilization. When the United States, which now make so considerable a figure in the civil system of the world, were in the infancy of their colonial character, it became no small part of the concern of their parental country that they should not be abandoned to barbarism, and that the emigrants should carry with them, to their new seats of settlement, the faith and the religious practices of their forefathers. This is a consideration which ought to bring on our consciences a debt, no otherwise to be discharged than by affording to the present emigrants from the early settle-

ments the like aid to that which the latter received from the common ancestry of both.

The sphere for religious sensibility to act in, is not yet opened in its extent. We live at a period when there are put forth prodigious efforts for the evangelizing of the world. Without pronouncing our opinion as to the individual merit of each of these enterprises, it would be a great oversight to omit to impress on our members the duty of participating in the great work of spreading the Gospel. It is well known that many are of opinion, that inasmuch as the destitute portions of the earth are the objects of the benevolent exertions of those Christian nations who have not so loud a call for domestic operations, as are presented in the immense districts of our country destitute of spiritual aid, it is not the duty of the American Episcopal Church, under present circumstances, to extend their beneficence beyond our own bounds. There are others who think, that not neglecting the calls to missionary enterprise at home, our zeal in the work of propagating Christianity among the Heathen nations abroad should be awakened by the examples of other communities in various kingdoms and states of Christendom, of which no small proportion is from bodies of professing Christians among ourselves. We have already adverted to this fact, as evidence of the excitement of an extraordinary measure of religious sensibility, calling for the directing of it to the purpose to which it points. The immense and populous realms of India, heretofore known only as a field inviting cupidity of wealth, are now open to the extending of enterprise, for the announcing of the glad tidings of salvation. Degraded Africa, so long visited in no other character than that of a nursery for distant bondage, may now cherish the hope of the redressing of her wrongs, by the imparting to her of civilization and of science, and of the more precious light of a heavenly

dispensation ; under which, in respect to privilege, there is “ neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all.” In islands of the Pacific, and in islands of the Southern Ocean, dissevered until lately from the rest of the world, there have been visitations with the Gospel message, and their idols have been seen prostrate before the Cross. In Greece, the seat of some of the earliest successes of apostolic preaching, in later ages, under the yoke of Mohammedan oppression, and enduring, like their sister churches on the opposite countries of Asia, the removal of their candlesticks from their places, there are incipient endeavours for the replacing of them, with such a blaze as was originally kindled by a Paul, a Barnabas, a Timothy and other founders of the Eastern church. In addition to these immense openings for the efforts of missionary zeal, there are, nearer to us, in the newly organized republics of our western hemisphere, opportunities not possessed till lately, of instructing the population in the religion of the Bible, hitherto not published to them, except with the intermixture of opinions and of rites hostile to its general spirit, and the growth of those ages of ignorance which witnessed the first efforts for the colonizing of the newly discovered western world. Other openings might be recited ; but it is trusted that those presented will be sufficient to show, that a new era has risen on the world, and that it is a new call on the zeal, on the labours, and for the pecuniary contributions of Christians.

If it should seem to any, that the prospect here portrayed originates in too sanguine a contemplation of the subject, our answer is, that there has been already an impression made on the state of the world, which, according to experience, and to observation of human nature, cannot but progress and enlarge its sphere of influence. It is well known, what

zeal has been put forth in the measure of diffusing the knowledge of the Bible : and although we are aware, that as in the beginning, and under divine appointment, there was, with the sacred books, a ministry constituted for the explaining and for the impressing of their contents ; yet it will be, or rather it has been, an effect of the possession of the book itself, to season the minds of readers with its truths shining on its pages with such clearness, that “ he who runs may read ;” thus proving a preparation for the overthrow of idolatry, whether in its avowed character, or under the disguise of the Christian name, and being the herald of measures for the organizing of Christian churches.

It is a sentiment often expressed by men who have considered well the present state of the world, and who delight in the anticipation of events, of which they think they perceive the struggles in the womb of time, that there are indications of the general spread of the Gospel, which we are warranted to expect, previously to the splendid issue, when “ all the kingdoms of the world shall have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.”

The sentiment is fruitful of encouragement ; although to be cherished with the modesty which forbids the too confident interpretation of prophecies, delivered in language highly figurative, in order that their senses should not be fully known, until the times of their respective accomplishment. We learn from history, that when there drew near the period, designated by Divine Wisdom for the manifestation of the wonderful Person “ spoken of by all the holy prophets who had been since the world began ;” it was in the course of Providence, that from the councils of those who had the civil government of nations, and from the changes in which widely extended wars eventuated, there should be produced a state of the world peculiarly favourable to the carrying of the tidings of salvation to all nations,

conformably to the saying of St. Paul concerning the preaching of the apostles—"Their sound went unto all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." In the conception of the persons referred to, something similar to this is to be discerned, in the signs of the times at present before our eyes. Independently on the question concerning the anticipated event, as to its being remote or near, when we consider the vast and continually increasing extension of the chain of commerce, with the intercommunity of nations which it occasions; the ardour for the navigating of unknown seas, and for the discovery of unknown lands on their numerous shores; the similar spirit of hardy enterprise, which, in instances beyond any of former days, carries explorers over sandy deserts and through pathless wildernesses, in search of population concealed from the world in their recesses; the lights drawn by the patient and persevering pursuits of science, from hitherto concealed monuments of former ages, and from a more strict investigation than formerly of animal and of other substances lying deep within the bosom of the earth, and the application of knowledge thus obtained to the defence of the Scriptures against the suggestions of infidelity, founded on imperfect knowledge and insufficient investigation; all these considerations go to prove, that there are causes in operation which cannot but have a powerful effect on the state and condition of the world; that, to appearance, the effect will be favourable to the Christian cause; and that therefore there is a call on every professor of Christianity, to take an interest in and to sustain it, by his personal influence; and as circumstances may permit, by his active endeavours, and by his contributions. In the contemplation of this subject as it respects the apparently approaching influx of Heathen people into the church of Christ, our minds are elevated by the recollection of the exclamation of the prophet Isaiah,

when, anticipating the effect of the preaching of the Gospel, he asked—"Who are these, who fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows?"

In contemplating the salutary influence of the religious excitement which is the subject, and in detailing the duties to which it points, we are not forgetful of the evils to which it may be abused by human frailty; and to guard against these will be pertinent to our present purpose.

One manifest evil is, that without due caution, it will prove favourable to the spirit of controversy; so as to tempt to engage in this unpleasant work unnecessarily; and when so engaged, to conduct it in such a manner as shall be inconsistent with Christian temper, and even productive of intemperate passion, and of the greatest excesses of censoriousness and of contumely: all of which will be reconciled to the consciences of the contenders, under the specious plea of its contributing to the glory of God. This is one of the shapes in which there is verified the apostolic saying—"Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." When there has been kindled the ardour of inquiry in any concerns deeply interesting; especially in the most interesting of all, those which have a bearing on the happiness of our immortal souls; when different views have been taken of the subjects at issue, and differences of opinion manifest themselves, in frequent conversation concerning what is uppermost in the public mind, there are so many leanings of the litigants to preconceptions, perhaps the effect of ideal associations, perhaps caused by different senses, which the same words convey to the understandings of different persons, and perhaps there intruding, without the consciousness of it, the ambition of excelling in argument, and of enjoying controversial triumph; that it requires no small measure of Christian prudence to distinguish between what calls for a greater and what for a less degree of zeal;

and no small command of Christian temper, to keep within the limits of the caution—"in meekness instructing them that oppose themselves, if God, peradventure, will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth."

We wish to be not misunderstood. It is far from our intention to discourage controversy in such a shape as shall, on any occasion, tend to the sacrifice of any truth of our holy religion; for we are aware of that other injunction—"earnestly to contend for the Faith, which was once delivered to the saints." But when we call to mind, that even in such a holy contest, there applies the intimation, "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God," and much more when we reflect, that controversy turns so much on speculations, to which it would be profitable to apply the saying, "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifyeth," and on practices, similar to those described by our Saviour under the terms of "the mint, the anise, and the cummin" of the Jewish ritual; we can think of no occasion on which God will be honoured by dishonour done to a grace, concerning which it is pronounced, that without it we are as "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal."

Another coincident evil is, that in some minds the state of feeling takes the lead of the judgment; becoming the parent of extravagances and of material error; not seldom the nurse of spiritual pride; and even impelling to actions in contrariety to moral obligation; but concealing their malignity under the cover of imposing names. Disorder of this sort was conspicuous under the agitation of men's spirits, produced by the powerful preaching of the apostles, continued in the age immediately following them, and even in its mildest forms, venting itself in notions compared by St. Paul to "wood and hay and stubble," and in others designated under worse characters, in various passages of the New

Testament, and in the earliest records of ecclesiastical history. These phantasms have disappeared ; while the precious instructions remain, to be the spiritual food of the faithful to the end of time.

The same frailty of human nature may be perceived in what took place at the blessed period of the reformation. However deeply laid the foundation of that event in the Scriptures of truth, it gave occasion to extravagances which were a disgrace to it, and which conducted their abettors to many errors and to many crimes. The benefit of the ecclesiastical revolution continues to be felt ; when, for the knowledge of the attendant disorders, it is necessary to have recourse to the pages of history, where we may see them fallen under the verifying of the declaration of the Saviour —“ Every plant which my heavenly Father had not planted shall be rooted up.”

There might be mentioned seasons of sensibility of a more local nature, but, in its accompaniments, manifesting the same infirmity ; and reference is made to them to show, that when, in our day, there is a similar movement of the mind of the community, if, in some instances, it should run wild into the region of enthusiasm, or discharge itself into any intricacy of unprofitable speculation, the fact would be analogous to what is incident to every blessing of Heaven, alike in nature and in grace, should be little thought of, in comparison of the good conspicuously wrought ; and not disproving the source of it in the agency of the Holy Spirit of God ; however erroneous it would be to ascribe to his influence any sensations or any actions which are contrary to truth and soberness.

We will mention a third instance in which, from the nature of the subject, we perceive the possibility of there being advantage taken of the described state of the public mind for

the accomplishment of purposes hostile to the general weal; or, if consistent with it, not to be endeavoured by means which may be put in operation. We allude to associations which may be found to have bearings either on the civil counsels of our country, or on those of our religious communion.

Far be it from us to limit the privilege of expressing, under no other limits than those of truth and decency, the sense either of an individual or of a legally constituted society of men, whether it be in reference to political interests or to those of the church. What we allude to is the merging of individual opinion in that of a combination not known in any existing institutions, and affecting its object by an anterior and illegitimate government, impairing, and perhaps at last destroying, that which rests on general consent and constitution. This misdirection of the public mind ought to be the more carefully guarded against, as it often proves a snare to well-meaning persons under the influence of either civil or of religious zeal, who are led, unconsciously, to contribute their aids either to political or to sectarian ambition. Any attempts, therefore, to connect the civil authority with the particular views of religious communities, or to produce that connection between the power of the civil government and that of any particular Christian denomination, from which have resulted consequences injurious to the rights, to the purity, and to the influence of the Christian church, are deprecated by the house of bishops, and as they believe, by the clergy and laity of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States.

It should apply to us individually, that if, in this season of sensibility, there should be a witnessing the salutary operation of it on the minds of others, or an excitement of it in our own minds by the frequent presentation of the truths of

religion, from pulpits or in social converse, we should recollect the source of this holy influence, and the responsibility with which it is clothed. There is, in this respect, an analogy in nature, in Providence, and in grace. As in the first of these departments God is present everywhere; so, in the second, every event brings a duty along with it; and in the third, there ought to be cherished the correlative impressions on that part of our nature concerning which it is said, that "out of it are the issues of life."

We shall conclude this address to the members of our church, with intreating them to be often in their supplications to the Throne of Grace for the success of all enterprises judiciously planned on scriptural principles, for hastening that blessed period when "God's way shall be known upon earth, his saving health among all nations." It is one of the petitions in the prayer of our Saviour, prescribed by him for daily use, that "his kingdom may come;" the kingdom described in ancient prophecy, under the image of "a stone cut out of a mountain without hands, and to fill the whole earth;" and more extensively represented in another prophecy, in which we read, "from the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering." These splendid views began to be met in the person of the adorable Redeemer, when there was "given him a name which is above every name;" but will not be fully verified until the fulfilment of the promise, "in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow." In the mean time, let it be the breathing of devout desire from the altars of our hearts—"even so come, Lord Jesus!" Words at the conclusion of the Canon of Scripture, to be taken on the tongues of his faithful followers, as expressive of their looking forward to the time when "the mystery of

God shall be finished ;" and of their readiness to join in all endeavours which tend to so glorious a consummation.

Signed by order of the House of Bishops,

WILLIAM WHITE, Presiding Bishop.

Philadelphia, Aug. 20, 1829.

PASTORAL LETTER No. IX.

FROM THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH, ASSEMBLED IN GENERAL CONVENTION, AT NEW YORK, OCTOBER, A. D. 1832.

BRETHREN,

By the mercy of God, your bishops are again assembled in general convention ; and as on former triennial occasions, they conclude their counsels with a pastoral letter to the fellow-members of their communion.

Since the admission to our ecclesiastical union, of certain dioceses by the last general convention, there has been organized that of Alabama, by accession to the constitution of the church.

We have to lament the decease, since the last convention, of our Rt. Rev. brother, Bishop Ravenscroft, of North Carolina. His episcopacy had not been of long continuance, but had been distinguished by labours which have raised the church in that state from the prostrate condition in which it had lain since the days of the Revolution ; and have left effects which give the promise of permanency and increase. Under the loss of so efficient a fellow-labourer, it is a source of consolation, that there has been consecrated as his successor the Rev. Levi Silliman Ives, formerly of the Diocese of New York. This Rt. Rev. brother has en-

tered on his field of duty, with a degree of zeal and industry which promise to sustain the interests of our communion, revived by his predecessor.

Since the last triennial session of our body, the church has also felt the heavy calamity of the decease of our Rt. Rev. brother, Bishop Hobart, of New York. He had been efficient in our counsels, which were much benefited by his sound and discriminating mind. In his proper diocese, the great increase of the number of churches, and of the members of those which existed previously to his episcopacy, remain the monuments of his unwearied zeal, and of the wisdom of his measures. His place has been supplied by the election and consecration of the Rt. Rev. Benjamin Tredwell Onderdonk; of whose future usefulness we have the more sanguine expectations, from the circumstance that his succession was in agreement with the wishes often expressed, of his lamented predecessor.

We have experienced a more recent loss, in the death of our brother, the Rt. Rev. Bishop Croes, of New Jersey. During his episcopacy, the church in that state had recovered from the devastations sustained by it during the Revolutionary war. In the late years of his life, his labours were much hindered by disease, which did not cause an abatement of his endeavours, until a short period before his death. The place of this our lamented brother has been supplied by the election of the Rev. George W. Doane, whose consecration is intended to take place, God willing, before the end of the present session.

At the time of our last general convention, the Diocese of Maryland had been, for some time, without episcopal superintendence. But, owing to a spirit of conciliation, there took place a unanimity of choice in favour of the Rev. William Murray Stone, who has been consecrated to the episcopacy, and whose conduct in the station of pres-

byter, gives the promise of an efficiency as considerable as Divine Providence may permit to his imperfect state of health.

In our review of the concerns of the missionary society of our church, we find them to have been zealously and usefully conducted by the executive committee. They have not been without considerable effect, and if it has not been to the extent which our wishes may have anticipated, the deficiency has been owing to the inadequacy of the means to the contemplated object. In this, however, there has been an enlargement of our prospects, by the increasing interest which we perceive to have been taken in the success of an institution imperiously called for, by the duty of putting forth our endeavours for the extension of the kingdom of the Redeemer.

Our Theological Seminary is conducted with an ability and an efficiency answerable to our most sanguine expectations. In regard to it, the only circumstance which we have to regret, is, that its annual receipts fall considerably short of its annual expenditures. Perhaps this is in a great measure owing to an erroneous consequence drawn from the knowledge of the very munificent legacy bequeathed to the institution by Frederick Kohne, Esq., as if the benefit ought to begin to operate. That bequest, when received, may be expected to add materially to the stability and the success of this important nursery of our ministry. But the result will be diminished in proportion as, in the meantime, the defalcation in the annual revenue may lessen what ought to be the amount of capital when the future benefit shall accrue. With pleasure we record that the defalcation from the revenue will be lessened, although not entirely met, by a later generous bequest; there having been devised, by George Lorillard, Esq., \$20,000, to be paid within five years.

During the sitting of the convention, there has been brought before them the subject of consecration to the episcopacy in the dioceses of three states, in consequence of the election of Rev. John H. Hopkins, D. D., to the Diocese of Vermont; of the Rev. Benjamin B. Smith, D. D., to that of Kentucky; and of the Rev. Charles P. Mellvaine, D. D., to that of Ohio. They have been canonically recommended by the house of clerical and lay deputies, and it is intended, God willing, that they shall be consecrated during the present session.

In regard to the last-mentioned reverend brother, there took place the important question, independently on any personal considerations, whether there existed a vacancy in the diocese for which he has been chosen. That matter occupied the most solicitous attention of both houses, during several days: the result was the conviction, that episcopal superintendence, with the duties attached to it, had been entirely withdrawn from the diocese; and that the cause of religion required the restoring of it, by the measure which has been communicated.

There was passed a canon, connected with the business the last mentioned, intended to prevent hasty and frequent resignations, not called for by the essential interests of the church.

The house of bishops, in concurring with the house of clerical and lay deputies in reference to the consecration of the reverend the bishop elect of the Diocese of Ohio, desire it to be understood, that they do not give their sanction to any provision of the College at Gambier, which can be construed as making a necessary connection between the presidency of the said institution and the episcopacy of the diocese, it seeming to the house of bishops an incongruity that the occupant of the latter should be dependent for his

continuance in his station on any authority not recognized in the canons.

The convention appointed a committee to consummate the work of a committee of the last general convention, in the selection of Psalms and portions of Psalms, which may be used instead of the whole Book of Psalms in Metre ; the latter being no part of the Book of Common Prayer, although included in our ecclesiastical services, and intended so to remain.

There were measures expected to eventuate in the organizing of a South-western diocese, consisting of the congregations of Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi ; with the probable expectation that it will be the mean of the introduction of the episcopal superintendence in that quarter.

The same will perhaps be the result of measures now in progress among the Episcopalians in the Territory of Michigan ; accordingly there has been acknowledged the existence of a diocese therein.

In a former convention, there was given their sanction for the use of a French translation of the Book of Common Prayer. Bishop Hobart was authorized to have the existing translation revised and corrected, and then to set it forth as authorized by this church. Agreeably to arrangements made by that Rt. Rev. brother, a revised translation has, since his decease, been published under the direction of his successor ; and set forth by this convention, as authorized to be used in congregations of our communion.

There being in many congregations, much unseemly diversity of posture, during the administration of the communion, from the want of information of the meaning of the rubrics ; the house of bishops have recorded on their journal their sense of the same, with the hope of remedying the evil.

During the convention there was a review of the canons of this church, and an improved code was adopted; of which the expected benefit, will be improvements which have been called for by experience.

The two houses received reports from the several dioceses, of the state of the church. To what extent the piety and the morals of the members of our communion are agreeable to our holy profession, it is not for us to estimate. But when we contemplate the measure in which there are countenanced the expedients put in operation for the extending of the kingdom of the Redeemer; we cannot but hope, that there is a correspondent increase of genuine devotion in a considerable proportion of our population; however many the instances to the contrary; by some from indifference to their eternal interests, and by others in unholy lives. In this there is an incentive to zeal and to every grace, on the part of our reverend brethren of the clergy; and it gives to us occasion, in our attention to the documents now noticed, to lament the continuance of the complaint of our Saviour, "The harvest is plenteous but the labourers are few," and to invite both the clergy and the laity to put up their prayer to "the Lord of the harvest," that he would "send forth labourers into his harvest."

In each of our former Pastoral letters we called the attention to some subjects, contemplated by us as important to the spiritual interests of the members of the church.—We shall pursue this plan on the present occasion; and the subjects which we select, are the relations in which we stand to the civil government of our country, to professing Christians of other denominations, and to the world at large.

In regard to the government of our country, while we are thankful to the Bestower of all good for our popular privileges, we ought to be careful not to misuse them, by

permitting them to detract from the obligation of those injunctions of Holy Writ, which sustain the civil authority in its constitutional rights, and which subject citizens or subjects of all descriptions to the control of the laws. We consider this counsel as independent on any question concerning existing limitations of power, or what ought to exist in a well regulated commonwealth, being desirous of committing every such question, so far as the morality of action is concerned, to a rule which we cannot express better than in the words of an eminent bishop of the church of England,* where he says, “The Scriptures stand clear of all disputes about the rights of princes and subjects”—of course, of those of republican rulers and their fellow-citizens—“so that such disputes must be left to be decided by the principles of natural equity, and the constitution of the country.”

Whatever difficulties may arise from interfering claims, and it is evident that there may occasionally be cases of this description, they have no bearing on that of quiet possession, as under the present circumstances of the United States; which renders every endeavor for the disturbance of the present order an offence against the precepts of our holy religion, given for its preservation.

It is not intended to deny the right of every individual of our combined commonwealth, guarantied to him by its constitution, of expressing his opinions concerning public measures and public men, provided it be done under the control of justice and of charity. But these are violated, when civil freedom is so prostituted, as to be a pretence for what is or may be ungrounded censure, and for proceedings tending to violence and to confusion. It is a remark of one of the wisest men who have ever written in our mother

* Bishop Sherlock, Discourse 13th.

Church of England,* that “he who goeth about to persuade a multitude that they are not so well governed as they ought to be, shall never want attentive and favourable hearers.” The same sagacious author has accounted for the fact, partly from ignorance, and partly by an appeal to certain frailties of human nature, operative in all countries, and at all times. This is a consideration which should make us cautious of admitting the charge of an abuse of power; and where it can be proved, should induce the seeking of redress by constitutional and peaceable proceedings; and in the meantime, to abstain from whatever may loosen the bonds of society; bringing the agents under the censure of the precept,—“Not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as servants of God.”†

It is an error extensively propagated, that religion and civil policy have no necessary connection; which is in contrariety to the declarations of Scripture referred to.—The connection is liable to abuses;—that of making religion the engine of oppression in various ways; and especially in directing the civil authority to the purpose of ecclesiastical intolerance. One of the greatest achievements of political wisdom, is the guarding against these results.—Still, there is the connection affirmed; and the necessity of it is generated by the evil passions of our nature, seeking private interest, to the injury of that of the public. There cannot be any counterbalance, except in the supply of restraints, looking beyond the boundaries of time. Of the said connection it is a proof, found in all the various states of society, that they require an appeal to the Rewarder of the good, and the Punisher of the wicked, in the administration of justice between man and man, and in securing the obedience of all orders of men to the laws which the

* Richard Hooker, Book i.

† 1 Peter, ii. 16.

public authority has ordained. It is on the same principle that our courts repel from the character of a witness, and from that of a juror, the man who denies the existence of a future state of rewards and punishments. These are expedients, which must be perceived to be useless and arbitrary, except on the ground of looking beyond human law to the decision of the monitor in the hearts of men, resting on sanctions connected with the belief of an eternal state of being.

It would be a misapprehension of these sentiments, if it should be imagined, that they are a restraint on the religious freedom which is so happily possessed by the citizens of the United States, and ought to be the possession of citizens and subjects throughout the world. So far as men are concerned individually, it is a blessing which no violence can withhold from them; and for the use of it, every man is accountable to God only. His public profession of his faith, and his public exercise of devotions suited to it, are a resulting privilege, in which he cannot be interfered with, unless it should be abused to the injury of society, and in opposition to laws ordained for the security of public peace, and of the rights of individuals. But these are considerations which do not abrogate the right, or dispense with the duty, attached to civil rule, of sustaining those fundamental truths of religion, independently on which there cannot be any social tie, or any obligation of law extending to the conscience.

On various occasions, and in various ways, our national legislature has manifested its sense of the obligation of those provisions contained in the several constitutions of the individual states, which presume the Christian religion to be a part of the law of the land. But this establishment is of such a liberal cast, as secures freedom of profession and of

worship to every denomination of Christians, living in obedience to the laws. It is the duty of every member of this church, to sustain by the weight of his character, whatever it may be, this spirit of our institutions, and to transmit it to posterity. But it is a duty not interfering with the right of those who govern, to acknowledge God in his providential dealings to our nation, and this on the terms of a code, which, from the time of the settlement of the colonies, and to this day, in their later character of states, has been sanctioned by public law, and by the public voice. As government thus holds out its support to the profession of religion, and to the performance of its devotional exercises, there is the greater reason for submission to what public authority may ordain; and for requiring of the clergy in particular, that in their ministrations, they apply the sanctions of religion to the sustaining of peace and order in the community, conformably to the injunction of the apostle, to be "subject not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake."*

It is often a misconstruction of the sentiments expressed, that the maintainers of them act on the impulse of their views of political expediency, and from their being aware of the need of the arm of government to the support of the Gospel, in return for its being the support of power. Far from this, we consider our faith as begun and carried on by a heavenly interposition, and the church as founded on a rock, where it will be perpetuated, through whatever changes may ensue in the constitutions of commonwealths and kingdoms. But whether these can endure the discontinuance of the acknowledgment of religion, as the spring of the conduct conducive to the safety of the state, is a problem, the affirmative of which the experience of the world will not warrant us to assume. On the contrary,

* Romans, xiii. 5.

there never has existed any political establishment, in which the magistracy has not found that acknowledgment necessary for purposes which cannot be reached by any human authority or by the operation of any human law. This end can be obtained no otherwise than by legislative countenance of what is so essential to the safety and to the interests of persons of all orders in the commonwealth.

In thus affirming the connection between these two subjects, on the ground of their nature and their end, it is reasonable to expect that it would be recognized by those holy Scriptures, which are not only the law for individuals in their several capacities, but enter into the relation which they bear to the governments under which they live. In the Old Testament, and under the theocracy established by it, while God himself is announced as the immediate governor and king, they who ruled by a delegated authority under him are required to be such men as “fear God;”* and they are admonished,—“Ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment;”† and, “Thus shall ye do in the fear of the LORD, faithfully, and with a perfect heart;”‡ and “He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.”§ Also, the great Sovereign of heaven is introduced saying, “By me kings reign, and princes decree justice;”|| responsive to such claims from the seat of authority, are such passages as where those subject to it are enjoined,—“Fear thou the LORD and the king, and meddle not with them that are given to change;”¶ and, “Thou shalt not revile the gods”—men who govern sometimes so called—“nor curse the ruler of thy people.”** In these, and in very many passages applicable to civil rulers, by whatever names they may be called, the contents

* Deut. xvi. 18. † 2 Chron. xix. 6, 7. ‡ 2 Chron. xix. 9;

§ 2 Sam. xxiii. 3. || Prov. viii. 15. ¶ Prov. xxiv. 21.

** Exod. xxii. 28.

are built on the foundation, that there is a bond of religion on governors, and on those subject to them, to their superiors, and to one another—a bond which applies to their consciences and which is necessary to the supplying of the defects of whatever can be set forth in human, and even in divine law, for the governing of the conduct.

When we pass to the New Testament, although its blessed author distinctly announced,—“My kingdom is not of this world,”* yet we find him providing for the peace and the order of all kingdoms and states, in the memorable injunction,—“Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s,”—of course unto rulers under whatever name.† His apostles sustain the same high duty, as in the instance of St. Peter, who, addressing a people among whom kingly government was established, admonishes them, “to honour and submit to the king;” and as in the instance of St. Paul, who, writing to another people, among whom the authority was partly in an individual with the name of emperor, and partly in a senate with their respective rights not exactly defined, uses the more cautious language—“Let every soul be subject to the higher powers, for the powers that be,” under whatever name they may be known, “are ordained of God.”‡ And in another place he enjoins,—“Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work.”§

If we have been diffuse on the present point, it has been owing to what we think a duty lying on us, of contradicting a theory hostile to social order; and rested on the plea, that government being founded on compact, and having for its object the security of person and property, the contracting parties, if so inclined, may discard all reference to a state to come. That every particular form of government

* John xviii. 36.

‡ Rom. xiii. 1.

† Matt. xxii. 21.

§ Tit. iii. 1.

is founded on compact either express or implied, may be acknowledged consistently with the present argument. But government itself is so imperiously called for by the necessities of the human condition, and by the sinfulness of human nature, that there is no degree of arbitrary rule to which men will not be subject, rather than be exposed to injuries from one another, uncontrolled by an authority to which they must all submit. Accordingly, the subject must be resolved into the will of God.

Whatever may be thought of the origin of government, there can be no doubt in the mind of any Christian, of the obedience due from him to that under which he lives, and the protection of which he enjoys. The position is especially true, in reference to the constituted authorities of the United States of America, which were established by the public voice; and in which there is security to the citizens against oppression and wrong of every sort, so far as human wisdom can provide. It is highly sinful to disturb such an organization, by a rage for innovation. And although this does not forbid any improvements which may be proposed, in virtue of a privilege secured to every individual, yet it should be exercised with moderation, and conducted consistently with the maintaining of the public peace, and by means permitted in the provisions of the constitution. Whatever is diverse from these restraints, brings the author and the abettors of it under the denunciation of St. Paul—"They that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation."*

If these are obvious dictates of Christian duty, they extend to the showing of respect to the persons of civil rulers and to the giving of the most charitable construction to their acts. So powerful is the law of association, in the imperfect condition of humanity, that there cannot be con-

* Rom. xiii. 2.

tempt poured on those who frame or on those who execute the laws, without its extending to the law itself, endangering the sense of the obligation of it, and causing that power instead of common right, shall be the only security for peace.

Owing to the imperfection of human affairs, there is no blessing without its peculiar dangers. This is especially true in reference to the right possessed by the American citizen, of giving his voice in the choice of the persons by whom the government of the country is to be administered. Far be the thought of denying, or of prescribing limits to the exercise of this right; but while, as a Christian man, he should conduct himself in it under the sense of his responsibility to God; this is a principle, which will keep him at a distance from all the unworthy arts, from all the angry contention, and from all the slander, sometimes practiced, and from all those acts of violence which too often characterize popular elections, arming hostile parties with enmities which go along with them into all the relations of life, and may, ultimately, render insecure the privileges which they abuse. For the exercise of them to the prosperity and the honour of our common country, and consistently with the precepts of our holy religion, they should never be in contrariety to the end of it, announced by its adorable author, that of "peace and good will to men."*

Whatever is contrary to the recommendations here offered would tend to the overthrow of any species of government. As to that of the United States in particular, how deplorable will be the issue, if when, after the experience of nearly the half of a century, we have had cause to hope for its perpetuity, and when there is a growing conviction of its advantages throughout the world, there should be a confirmation of the theories which pour contempt on popu-

* Luke ii. 14.

lar privileges, and look for legitimate government, only to the strong arm of power!

It falls in with the design of this letter, to caution alike the clergy and the laity, to avoid the giving of countenance to any associations of men, who, in that of their combined character, and under the profession of advancing the cause of religion, may arrogate an influence in elevating to seats of civil distinction and of power. We do not deny the right of every man, in his individual character, and we even maintain that it is his duty, in giving his voice for public trusts, to prefer their being bestowed on men, who, so far as can be judged from their conduct, are under the influence of those religious considerations, independently on which, there can be no security in any department, for the integrity of those who fill it. But when this object is attempted by organized combinations unknown to the laws, and subjecting the sense of the individual to that of the body of which he is a part, there intrudes into them the same diversity of views as in associations constituted by the laws, with this difference, that in addition to the usual arts of a crooked policy, they have on them the stamp of ecclesiastical ambition, not without the mixture of hypocrisy.

The next point on which we proposed to offer our counsels, is the relation in which we stand to the other denominations of professing Christians. We are necessarily brought into contact with them, by the intercommunity of civil privileges, by concurrent exertions for the advancement of the interests of our common religion, by the various occupations of secular life, and by family connections and friendships, sometimes hereditary, and sometimes the result of choice. This is a subject which should be entered on with caution; lest, on the one hand, there should be a departure from the law of charity; and even manifested a spirit, which, if circumstances permitted, would proceed to persecution;

and lest, on the other hand, there should be a sacrifice to a species of intolerance assuming the name of liberality, and made a cover of insidious designs.

The positions in which our different denominations stand to one another, is peculiar in respect to their common level. This is unlike to what prevails generally over the Christian world, of a dominant form of profession, from which every other form is dissent, perhaps tolerated, yet considered as inimical to the public good, and more or less under the pressure of penal law ; while, on the other hand, every suffering and every privation, is either resisted or indignantly endured.

We do not enter on the question, how far rulers are permitted in reason, or are under religious obligation, to call in the church as their ally, for the giving of stability to civil government. Sufficient for the present purpose, is the circumstance demonstrated by experience, that the supporters of an establishment will, whether with or without cause, accuse the seceders of ungrounded scruples, perhaps tending to sedition ; while these will complain of oppression, in their being excluded, on account of their religious theories, from the honours and the emoluments of their country. Whatever weight there may be, or whether there be any, in the arguments used by either of these classes of persons ; with us, there is not any ground for such mutual jealousy and hostility as have been alluded to : there being no dominant profession ; and all being equally allowed to worship God, in such public exercises as they the most approve of.

This is a motive to mutual forbearance ; although not at the cost of preventing decided testimony, given, as an apostle has required, “ with meekness and fear,”* against whatever we hold to be contrary to the faith or to the morals of the Gospel ; whether its holy declarations be directed to the defence of “ the foundation, other than which no man can

* 1 Pet. iii. 15.

lay ;” or against those who build on it, not “ the gold, the silver, and the precious stones” of evangelical truth, but “ the wood, the hay, and the stubble” of human weakness.*

It ought to be a sufficient motive of a tolerating and conciliatory policy, of religious denominations to one another, that they may see before them an enemy in that spirit of infidelity which levels its arts at the root of their common faith, and without denying the existence of human duty, would do away the sanction of it in the revealed will of God.

It is a sufficient discouragement to the minds of all pious persons, that the favourers of sentiments so much fraught with mischief, should have cause of triumph in the diversity of denominations ; all claiming to be built on the true foundation. But when they are seen assailing one another with an acrimony forbidden by their common faith, which enjoins its professors to be “ gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing them that oppose themselves, if peradventure God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth,”† it is a stumbling block, which affords a more specious plea to infidelity, than any that can be drawn from the weight either of their own characters, or of their arguments.

Against the operations of that irreligious portion of the community, it ought to be a cause of jealousy, with all who have either religion or the public good at heart, that concerning these two objects, there is unequivocally avowed the opinion, that they have no natural alliance, and that the one may be provided for independently on the other. The error of this opinion has been already treated of ; and it will be pertinent to add, that it strikes at the use of oaths ; at the abstaining from judicial proceedings on the Lord’s day ; and at the legislative accommodations for the worship of God on that day, and at other times. Why should there be

* 1 Cor. iii. 11, 12, 13.

† 2 Tim. ii. 25.

granted to us charters and laws, protecting us in the enjoyment of those privileges, and in the possession of property in a reasonable extent, if there be no good to be derived from such provisions to the state? The time is not come for the urging of a pretended reform on these points; but the tendency of the opinion to it, ought to be borne in mind. In consideration of this common danger, there is the more reason to be gratified by whatever good may be achieved by our brethern of other denominations; in which we shall be warranted by that saying of St. Paul, "Notwithstanding, every way, CHRIST is preached, and herein I do rejoice, yea and will rejoice."* Let the honour of the success be what it may, it should be a ground, not of hatred and of jealousy, but of excitement, to the clergy, of zeal in their labours; and to both clergy and laity, of circumspection in their conduct; and of carefully avoiding every thing, by which "the word of God and of his doctrine may be blasphemed."†

Although these are considerations, bringing additional weight to those involved in the subject itself; they are not intended to discourage the clergy from instructing their congregations in those institutions of our church, which we believe to be scriptural, and although disallowed by many of our fellow Christians, to have been handed down to us from the earliest ages of the church. Such instruction is a duty, and may be without any of the severity in language and in manner, which give occasion for the charge of a sectarian spirit. Perhaps the object may be the best accomplished, by lectures detached from the ordinary course of sermons, and coincident with preparing for the ordinance of confirmation. It is not, that the same subjects should be interdicted from the ordinary exercises of the pulpit, especially when they present themselves incidentally. But it is a department, in which the matter is overdone, should a proportion of a

* Phil. i. 10.

† 2 Tim. vi. 1.

congregation have cause to complain, that the bread of life is withholden from them, to give place to discussions, which rather concern the outward discipline of the church, than the truths to be protected by it; and especially, when there is no appearance of a call for the other, in the threatening of resistance against the ecclesiastical authority, or against the reasonableness of our services. It has pleased God in his providence, to permit the variety of profession abounding in the Christian world. With us it rests, while we adhere to the principles transmitted to us from the purest ages—for a long time blended with dogmas and with practices not warranted by an early origin, but at last disencumbered of such extraneous matter, and coming to us through the channel of the Church of England—to perpetuate the same, without accommodating to other communions in any important points, not excepting such as are left to human discretion, when no good is to be thereby answered.

There are often persons of other denominations, who, with the concurrence of some, perhaps well-meaning, but, as we think, mistaken members of our church, are forward in projecting, and in carrying into operation expedients of combination for the inculcating of what they think the only essential truths of the Gospel, detached from the diversities which characterize the discordant theories; and as they suppose, may be lost sight of, in the common object of evangelical instruction. Against such amalgamation, we hold ourselves bound in conscience, to declare our decided disapprobation. 1st. We do not perceive, that a minister of the Gospel can lawfully bind himself under the tie of a voluntary association, intended to cover with the mantle of silence, any matter resting on Gospel verity, and contributing to the sustaining of it; especially when he is bound to inculcate the same, by an obligation laid on him in the promises made at his ordination on every occasion, opening

a prospect of doing so with success. 2dly. So far as the experience and observation of the most of us have extended, in relation to the associations now contemplated, the assurances pledged by them are not generally fulfilled. A sectarian spirit has sometimes showed its head. Individuals of them, and sometimes the associated bodies, perhaps unconsciously, have introduced into their acts some matters in contrariety to the known tenets of the Episcopal Church; the members of which are thus insensibly drawn to set light by the doctrines of her communion. 3dly. It has the effect of bringing into view such litigated points in unorganized Christian intercourse, and in the courteous interchange of the civilities of social life, as tend to the generating of angry feelings. It is a much better expedient for the maintaining of peace and of friendly offices among different denominations, that each of them should sustain the cause of God and of godliness, by such means as are presented by their peculiar organizations; exercising toward every other all the forbearance and all the charity, which may reasonably be exacted by a regard to the fallibility of the human understanding, and by the workings of unperceived prejudice, in ourselves, and in others with whom we have to do; and all the esteem which may be thought due to any virtues which they may possess, or to any good deeds which they may perform. This is a species of charity which may be maintained without the abandonment of principle.

The third particular which we are to present, is the relation in which our church stands to the world at large; meaning in the duty of extending over it the knowledge of salvation.

It is a remarkable fact in the life of our blessed Saviour, that although his personal ministry was to be limited to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel,"* yet his Gospel

* Matt. xv. 24.

was to be “preached to all nations,” before “the end should come.”* The same issue was intimated by him in those very strong terms—“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth,” explained by the subsequent event of the crucifixion, “will draw all men unto me.”† It is an annunciation, which distinctly describes what happened soon after, of the influx of Gentile nations into the Church of Christ, and finally, the extension of his kingdom over the whole world; verifying the prediction delivered many hundred years before concerning it,—“From the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place, incense shall be offered to my name, and a pure offering.”‡

It is a remarkable circumstance, and what ought to be felt in all the concerns of the Christian church, that the last act of the ministry of our Saviour on earth, was the commission given by him to his disciples,—“Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.”§ In those disciples, we may contemplate the whole community of Christians, as it will exist to the end of time; which must be under the weight of the injunction, given at that interesting crisis; and resting an obligation on them, not only in their collective capacities, but individually, according as God may have furnished them with ability, in their respective spheres.

Of the actings of the apostles and of the early Christians under the commission, we have evidence in the records of that period. Although, agreeably to the instruction given by the Saviour, there was a “beginning at Jerusalem” of the preaching of “repentance and remission of sins;”|| yet the glad tidings of the Gospel were soon extended “to

* Matt. xxiv. 14.

§ Mark xvi. 15.

† John xii. 22.

|| Luke xxiv. 47.

‡ Mal. i. 11.

those who were near, and to those who were afar off,"* embracing in one catholic communion, "the Jew, and the Greek, the Barbarian, the Scythian, the bond, and the free."† So great was the spread of the glad tidings of salvation, that the preaching of them became compared to the language of the luminaries of heaven, "whose sound went out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world."‡

As to the call of the world in general, it may be considered as bearing toward Christian people two different aspects. The first is, as pleading for the supply of whole states, within the bounds of our federal commonwealth, slenderly visited with preaching and the administration of the ordinances, by energies hitherto put forth within our communion; although, in those realms, there are many professors of our church, who have migrated to them from the elder states. It is deeply painful to add, that even in the latter, there are districts in which the like privation is to be found; while there is grown up in them a generation, as destitute of a knowledge of the primary truths of the Gospel, as are the savages of the wilderness, with a corresponding state of morals.

Secondly, on the subject of extending the knowledge of the Gospel beyond the bounds of our federal Union, it may seem, that we are released from all obligation to it by the wants and by the pressing calls from quarters nearer to our homes. We do not deny the more prominent claims of the latter description; and if, in the minds of some, the energies of our communion would be the most advantageously limited to them; the opinion is the result, not of indifference to the other object, but of the yet existing circumstances of this church, and to cease with them. Still there ought not, perhaps, to be put out of view the need of a

* Isa. lvii. 19.

† Col. iii. 11.

‡ Rom. x. 18.

reasonable share of attention to more distant exigencies ; which has been seen to have been bound on us by the express command of the adorable Author of our religion ; and when there is contemplated the end of all exertions in the holy cause—the hastening of the time which will assuredly be brought about by the providence of God, although not without the instrumentality of human means, when “the earth shall be covered with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”* It is even probable, that the putting forth of our endeavours to the extent which the wisdom of God has directed, will be the mean of securing his blessing within the more limited sphere, to which we may be tempted to confine them. We shall hereby sustain the character of a Christian church ; any defalcation from which, in a single point, may have the effect of lowering our whole system in that public opinion, which is necessary to an extensive usefulness.

Some other denominations have been in advance of us in this labour of love, and their exertions have not been without effect. If there should be charged on us as a fault, that we have been too long inoperative, it ought to be remembered in extenuation, if not in excuse, that our church, after the wreck of the Revolution, required much correspondence, and much of common counsels, for the bringing together and for the consolidating of its several branches, kept separate under the old regime, from the times of the settlement of the former colonies ; and, at the date of the establishment of independence, having no other tie than that of a common origin, and that of consent in whatever related to doctrine, to worship, and to ecclesiastical government. We congratulate our fellow-worshippers, on account of the blessing which has crowned our endeavours, for the carrying of the glad tidings of salvation to distant lands ; and

* Hab. ii. 14.

we solicit their prayers, as well for the exciting of a greater degree of zeal, as for the success of whatever labours may be undergone in this cause of Christian charity. For our part, we are encouraged in our feeble efforts, by the voice of the angel, who was seen “flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people ;”* an annunciation, which occupies such a place in the prophecies of St. John, as to encourage the expectation of the fulfilment of it, by a comparing of it with the present civil and religious condition of the world, and by events which have been occurring for some years past, and continue to occur. Without envying the reputation of other societies, in their doings under the sanction of this high behest, it cannot come under the charge of a sectarian spirit, when we consider it as due, alike to the integrity, and to the reputation of our church, that in the progress and in the consummation of so great a work, there ought not to be unseen and unfelt those of our institutions, which we boast to have inherited from the purest ages ; and a departure from which, we lament in many societies of our fellow Christians ; whatever merits they may otherwise possess, commanding our esteem and our affection.

In doing justice to the means which have been set at work, for the spreading of a knowledge of the glad tidings of salvation, we cannot but especially honour the various ways which have been brought into operation, for the circulating of the Scriptures of truth, as well in our land, by putting them into the hands of those who might otherwise be ignorant or imperfectly informed of their restraints and their consolations, as for sending them to countries the population of which, although nominally Christian, are entirely ignorant of their contents, or only partially permitted to

* Rev. xiv. 6.

peruse them. We are aware of the fact, that the original publishing of the Scriptures, was with the accompaniment of the ministry, for the unfolding of its sense, for the impressing of it on the consciences, and for the rendering of it persuasive to the hearts of men. But there may be and there are co-ordinate measures, for the furnishing of missionary labours, and of explanatory notes and comments; not forgetting the edifying illustrations of Scripture, in our Book of Common Prayer. But if the Bible should be sometimes sent beyond the bounds, within which the receivers can be addressed by a ministerial agency, either verbally, or through the medium of the press; they will find so much of salutary instruction addressed to their understandings, and enforced by their natural sense of propriety and of good morals, as will of itself render them the better members of society, and perhaps prepare them for that oral instruction, which may ultimately be brought to them by the good providence of God. It is also no small advantage, derived from the putting of the Bible into the hands of a population discouraged from the perusal of the whole of its contents, that on their discovery of its contrariety to the many opinions and practices, which either deny or obscure its truths, it will disencumber many of them of the inventions with which those truths have been blended, extending the knowledge of the faith, in the purity in which it was "once delivered to the saints."*

Under the weight of this last department of our letter, we feel ourselves called on to admonish our brethren of the clergy; and it is our prayer that the admonition may be brought home to our own bosoms; to remark the excitement presented to us by the circumstances of the present times, to zeal and to industry in the several duties of our vocation; and to be aware, that the approbation of our heavenly

* Jude 3.

master will be forfeited, not only by "the wasting of our talents," but by "the hiding of them in a napkin."* However censurable any immorality, or even levity; the being free from these, will be far short of what is bound on us by the word of God, and of what we pledged ourselves to, at our entrance on the ministry.

To the laity of our church we say, that although not under the apostolic injunction "to give themselves wholly" to the work of extending the glad tidings of salvation, it is their duty to aid it by their prayers, by their influence, by their contributions, and by their "adorning of the doctrine of their God and Saviour in all things."† Both clergy and laity may be told, that we shall in vain claim the character of a church distinguished by the soundness of its institutions, and to be so acknowledged by the world, if they are seen to be inoperative in practice.

Signed by order of the House of Bishops,

WILLIAM WHITE, Presiding Bishop.

New York, October 30, 1832.

* Luke xix. 20.

† Tit. ii. 16.

PASTORAL LETTER No. X.

FROM THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL
CHURCH, ASSEMBLED IN GENERAL CONVENTION AT PHILA-
DELPHIA, AUGUST, A. D. 1835.

BRETHREN,

WE once more address you in a Pastoral Letter, from a triennial meeting of our body. It is an occasion on which we cannot be assembled without having our attention drawn to the fact, that we are within a few days of the period when there assembled in this city the first general convention for the organizing of our church, after conventions in different dioceses. It was a work attended by many difficulties, at last happily overcome: an issue encouraging the hope, now, after the intervening of the half of a century, that it is an instance of the verifying of the promise of the Divine head of the church, of his being with her to the end of the world.

In the course of the present session, the attention of the convention was occupied by some important subjects. The most prominent of them shall be here exhibited; and it is to be hoped that their proceedings thereon will tend to the stability and to the increase of the church, proportioned to the singular measure of unanimity with which they were conducted.

The church in the state of Illinois has been admitted into our ecclesiastical union. They are not competent, according to the canons, to the choice of a bishop for consecration; but having chosen for their bishop the Right Rev. Philander Chase, D. D., who had resigned his episcopacy in the diocese of Ohio, they were admitted, with their bishop, into the aggregate body.

To the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society there has been given a new form, of which the principal features are—the vesting of the paramount direction in the general convention; their acting through the intermediate agency of a board of missions chosen by them; and the separating of the two departments, in each of which there is to be a committee for the accomplishing of its objects.

The state of the theological seminary has been before the convention; and while they perceived cause of entire satisfaction with the conducting as well of its pecuniary as of its literary concerns, they are gratified by the evidence manifested of its usefulness, in the liberal donations bestowed on it, and in the continually increasing number of its students.

There was brought before the convention, a question tending to the permitting of the division of dioceses, under certain circumstances. It appearing to both houses that such an expedient may become necessary from the increase of episcopal population in the large dioceses, provision was made for the object.

The convention empowered certain clergymen, conversant in the German language, to prepare and set forth in the same, a translation of the liturgy.

There has been recommended to our congregations, a more rubrical practice than is now apparent, of certain parts of the liturgy, in which the people are required to join with the minister.

A few canons were passed ; some of which are additions to those already in force, and others for the alterations of the latter in points on which experience has dictated the utility of changes.

A very important addition to the canons, is the authorizing of the consecration of missionary bishops for those portions of the United States, in which the church has not yet been organized. To this has been added another provision, for the extending of the episcopacy to other countries, in which the Gospel is as yet unknown.

There were other measures during the session, for which we think it sufficient to refer to the journal.

Between the last general convention and the present, there have been some incidents of considerable interest. In January, 1834, there took place the consecration of the Rev. James H. Otey, D. D., for the diocese of Tennessee. In that state there was not a church, nor the vestige of a congregation, until the introduction of our liturgy into it by their present bishop, when he began his labours there in the character of a deacon. That it should so soon contain an episcopal population, entitling to the choice of a bishop, is a remarkable fact not to be noticed without the commendation due to the zeal and the labours which, under the blessing of God, have accomplished so extensive a work.

The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society have done much, through the medium of their executive committee. Besides their aid afforded to sundry missionaries, who have been forming new congregations in sundry districts of the Union, they have supported two very expensive establishments noticed in our former Pastoral Letters ; one of them in Greece, and the other at Green Bay. There is the less need to be circumstantial in the detail of the present state of these establishments, and of the proceedings relative to them, as they are matters presented in various

shapes to the notice of all inquiring members of our communion. It will be more important to record the great effort, which, under the instructions of the society, the executive committee have lately put forth for the sending of two missionaries to China. It is generally known, that for some ages past, there has been the most vigilant attention of the court of Peking, against the introduction of the Gospel among the millions of the inhabitants of what is called "the Celestial Empire." From late accounts well authenticated, it appears that the prejudice has subsided; that the sound of the Gospel is heard without hindrance, in the provinces bordering on the ocean; and that it has even penetrated to the interior. Who can tell whether this may not be a link in that chain of Divine providence, which shall assuredly end in the fulfilment of the promise: "All the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of the LORD and of his CHRIST." The two young brethren who have engaged with self-devotedness on the mission, had received their theological education, one of them at the general seminary in New York, and the other in that of Alexandria, under the diocese of Virginia. In consideration of the purity of their motives, we trust that they have been suggestions of the HOLY SPIRIT; and we solicit for them the prayers of the members of our church throughout the Union.

Besides what has been already said of the general theological seminary, it has continued to send out annually well-educated sons, prepared for the field of Gospel labour. The increase of the number of its pupils has been a call for an additional building, which the trustees are accordingly erecting. The funds do not yet amount to what is required for its support; so that there continues the necessity of annual collections for it in the different dioceses.

The General Sunday School Union, although increasing

in the number of its auxiliaries, is too far short of a comprehension of the whole of the local schools. Perhaps it is owing to the want of attention to the subject, which is to be regretted, because it presents an organization, the best calculated to resist the efforts perseveringly made for the withdrawing of our Sunday schools from the pastoral superintendence of their respective churches.

It will be understood that this survey is of institutions proper to the general church, all efforts of a diocesan character being left to the records of the appropriate journals.

Brethren, it has been the practice of the bishops, that in each of their triennial addresses, they have taken occasion to call your attention to some point or points characteristic of our church, and attention to which is especially invited by existing circumstances. This course shall be now continued.

It has been a question how far, in the estimation of the Church of England, and of course of her daughter in the United States, the works of the fathers are to be resorted to for the ascertaining of Christian doctrine, discipline, and worship. Those two churches are explicit in the declaration of their belief, that the Scriptures are the only standard of divine truth; yet, in the preface to their ordinal, in their articles and more copiously in their homilies, those ancient fathers are referred to as having weight on the points to which they are applied. What clothes the subject with especial importance is this: while there is set up the claim of submission to a foreign church, on the ground of tradition through the fathers, of all the communions differing from that church, and from our own; there are not any who, in their public standards, have recourse to the here advocated testimony, for aid in attaining to Divine truth.

So unequivocal and so often repeated, and this with especial stress laid on the doctrine, is our belief of the suf

fiency of the books of inspiration, that the only reason for the calling in of that exterior aid, must be its administering to interpretation ; in like manner as in civil concerns this object is effected by the knowledge of coincident opinions, customs and events, certified by present and by succeeding times. Without reference to such authority, there are many passages of Scripture from which no reasonable sense can be educed.

This ground is merely an enlargement of that taken by us, in ascertaining what should be received as the canonical books of Scripture. Our articles declare the church to be "the witness and the keeper of Holy Writ." She is the traditionary witness of books published to the world, as from the pens of the several persons whose names they bear; and she is the keeper of them for the prevention of forgery or of any other species of imposition. This is the only defensible ground, for the affirming of the integrity of the sacred volume; and it cannot be surrendered without a committing of the subject to the judgments or to the tastes of fallible men, in one shape or in another. Our church differs from the opinion entertained by some, that a divine character is so impressed on every book, as to be itself evidence of inspiration. Historic testimony was the guide of the early fathers, in their establishing of the canon.

Lest even the deriving of this moderate help from the fathers should seem to be a detraction from the authority of holy Scripture, it will be to the purpose to cite a few of their testimonies in favour of its sufficiency.

In the age immediately after that of the apostles, it is said by Justin Martyr, in his dialogue with Trypho, a Jew ; "Attend to what I shall recite out of the holy Scriptures ;" which is opposed to what the Jew has alleged on the ground of tradition.

In the next age, St. Irenæus says, in his work against the

heretics, "The method of our salvation, we have known from those men by whom the Gospel came to us, which then they preached, but afterward, by the will of God, delivered to us in the Scriptures, to be the foundation and the pillar of our faith."*

In the third century, toward the middle of it, St. Cyprian being opposed by an argument from tradition, demands, "Whence have you that tradition? Comes it from the authority of the LORD and of the Gospel, or from the epistles of the apostles? For God testifies that we are to do those things which are written."

In the next age, St. Austin calls Scripture "the divine balance, for the weighing of doctrine;" and he says, "All things which appertain to life and doctrine, are plainly set down in Scripture."

To go no further than to the next century, we there find in St. Jerome, "Of those things which without the authorities and the testimonies of Scripture, men invent of their own heads, as from apostolical tradition, they are smitten with the sword of God."

From the mass of authorities to the same effect, these few

* It has been held very important, to procure the testimony of so early a father as Irenæus to the co-ordinate authority of tradition. Two passages are quoted from him; and the irrelevancy of them is proof of the opposite senses. In one of them, he intimates, that if the apostles had left no Scriptures, we ought to recur to tradition; implying, that being in possession of the former, we should hold the latter not essential. In the other passage, the father, in opposition to the plea of the Valentinian heretics, grounded on the obscure tradition of their sect, opposes to it the more respectable tradition of the then pure church of Rome, founded by St. Peter and St. Paul. By quoting a part only of the argument, and by the change of "undique" [on all sides] into "ubique," [everywhere,] there has been fastened on the passage a sense not thought of by the father.

have been selected. It is incorrect, when to elevate tradition to a co-ordinate rank with Scripture, there is put out of view, that the latter rule is not uncommonly included under the former. When St. Paul, in his journey through several cities, "*delivered* them the decrees to keep;" when he said, "That which I received of the LORD I *delivered* to you;" the original word would have been as well rendered "*tradited*," had this been a word in common use. Under the same remark there comes the word "traditions," and "tradition," in 2 Thess. ii. 15, and iii. 6. Agreeably to this use in Scripture itself, admitting of a limited or of a more extended sense, there falls the word as used by the early fathers.

These considerations are presented, in order to show that we do not surrender the point of the sufficiency of Scripture, when, in so doing, we should act in contrariety to the sense of those fathers whose opinions are exalted by some, as constituting an authority equal to that of Holy Writ, and equally a rule of faith. But this hinders not that they may faithfully report the fact of there having been held this or the other opinion, by the Christians of their respective times. It is no more than the credit which we should give to certain heathen historians, as to Pliny or to Tacitus, in relation to some facts in the concerns of the church, falling under their several notices.

After being guarded against the imputation of the disparagement of Scripture, let there be a transition to the advantages gained to the Church of England, and to the Protestant Episcopal church in the United States, by admission of the testimonies of the fathers, in the qualified sense which has been defined.

1st. It establishes the distinction which those churches take between what they acknowledge to be the canonical books of Scripture, to the exclusion from the canon of

others which have not the like stamp of authority. We contend, as already stated, that recourse must be had to tradition for the simple fact that this or the other book has been handed down as the work of the person whose name it bears, in like manner as the records of a court are transmitted from generation to generation, and held to be faithful entries of the doings of intervening times. It is not alleged, that in the first three centuries, there is notice of any of the books called the Apocrypha. In the succeeding ages, when those books are mentioned by any of the fathers, it is as of a grade inferior to that of those which we receive as canonical. For this it may be sufficient to cite the authority of St. Jerome, who wrote toward the end of the 4th century, and who says of them: "The church reads them, indeed, but does not receive them among the canonical books of Scripture." What has contributed materially to the opposite and erroneous opinion, is the circumstance already stated, that the fathers occasionally make use of the word "tradition," in the sense of its embracing of holy Scripture. As to our church, it is well known that she discriminates between the books held to be inspired by the Spirit of God, and the books of the Apocrypha, permitted by her to be read, "for instruction in life and manners." It is a very important distinction, and is much confirmed in contrarieties of views introduced into the church several ages after that of the apostles.

2dly. Another advantage which the church derives from the same source, is the additional evidence which it brings to the determinations of the two creeds; especially in reference to their exhibition of the doctrine of the sacred Three in the Divine nature—FATHER, SON and HOLY SPIRIT. Although they are recognized in the short form of the Apostles' Creed, yet against each of the three were the assaults of error; to the injury of the faith of some. One

class of heretics, under the name of Sabellianism, contradicted the paternity. Other species of them annihilated the character of the Son; either on the one hand, degrading it to that of mere man, or at most of a superangelic nature, originated in time—for such were the Ebionites and the Arians; or on the other hand, pretending to do honour to the Divinity, by merging in it the humanity; for such was the folly of the Docetæ. And in respect to the HOLY SPIRIT, there was, by the Macedonians, the pretence of his recent descent, superseding that on the day of Pentecost, and communicating a more perfect dispensation. These heresies were resisted by a succession of men who were known to speak the sense of the universal church, and whose works have been transmitted to us. Succeeding times have reproduced these heresies. Does it not then contribute to security, that there may be found a preservative from the poison of them in the documents referred to? The Church of England, under the security of Divine protection, has kept close to the integrity of revealed truth; while denominations formerly consenting with her, have departed from their united testimony, in some instances to the verge of infidelity. Who can tell to what extent the error has been occasioned by a light esteem of what was held universally by Christians, immediately after the age of the apostles?

3dly. There is the benefit derived to our church from her qualified use of the fathers, that she disengages herself from all concern in the many questions which modern theology has made the subjects of much controversy, involving some matters which do not seem to have been known to the early ages, in the shape either of truth or of error. The writings of the fathers of those ages, tend to the confirmation of such truths of holy Scripture as come under the name of the doctrines of grace. But in after times, by the

extension of the sphere of metaphysics in the province of theology, the mixture gave rise to many controversies, on which there is such silence of the fathers of the first three centuries, that if the matters contended for were Christian doctrine, they must have ceased to be operative from the days of the apostles, until revived, at the distance from them of more than three hundred years. This would be contrary to what we know of human nature, and of the history of opinion in any department. It cannot be denied of some of the fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries, that in their laudable resistance of innovating doctrines, they precipitated themselves into contrarieties not found in Scripture; and not exhibiting a ground on which reason can exercise its powers with certainty. If such matters were unknown to the fathers of the first three centuries, it is a reason for the considering of them as uninteresting at the present day. While we are thus taught to give weight to the opinions of the fathers, in some measure proportioned to the nearness of them severally to the source of truth; we find the benefit of the distinction to our church, in her silence on points affirmed by some denominations to be of the utmost importance to a genuine profession.

Under this head, it will not be irrelative to remark, that we raise a barrier against all the notions which have lately been obtruded under the avowed character of neology; divesting Christianity of whatever is above the sphere of human reason, although not contrary to the determinations of that faculty.

4thly. Another point on which our church gathers strength to her cause from the same quarter, is that of the episcopacy. Be it that the apostolic designation of the three orders of the ministry may be proved from holy Scripture; still, while scriptural authorities receive plausible interpretations, opposed to what we conceive to be their genuine senses, for

the justifying of forms of ecclesiastical government, destitute of example during fifteen hundred years from the beginning of the Christian era, it is of consequence on our part, to avail ourselves of writings in our favour, handed down to us during that long tract of time, including the three earliest centuries. The objection opposed to our theory by the most judicious of the divines who dissent from us, is, that at a certain period, meaning in the latter half of the second century, from which but few documents have descended, the original parity may have been broken down, by there being obtruded on the church the unknown character, until then, of diocesan episcopacy. Of this plea we make light, when we have to argue that it is mere conjecture; that during the comparatively short term in which parity is alleged to have prevailed, there is not produced an instance of an organized body of presbyters acting independently on the control of episcopacy; and that it is unreasonable to imagine such a change to have taken place, in a church extending itself in disjointed members over the greater part of the then known world, by simultaneous movements and without opposition; in contrariety to that property in the human character, which never fails to take alarm at the assumption of power, and to throw impediments in the way of the exercise of it. Of this advantage we should deprive the ministry of our church, if we should reject the aid of the fathers; not as on a level with Scripture, but as explanatory of it.

5thly. To instance another point, on which there may be derived to our church similar advantage from the same source. It is the being in possession of a prescribed form of prayer; and the not subjecting of a congregation to the discretion of every officiating minister. For this, besides our Lord's enjoining on his disciples of the form of prayer called by his name, we think we have a warrant in his attendance, and in that of his apostles, on the devotions of the temple

and of the synagogues. Yet it being contended, that a more spiritual worship was designed to be instituted under the Gospel, and that this is inconsistent with ritual requirements, suited to the imperfect dispensation of the law, it sustains our cause, that we are able to produce expressions from the three earliest of the centuries, evincing that there were known in the church what were called "common prayers," and "constituted prayers;" and that there are remains of liturgies, although imperfect and adulterated, of the origin of which no history can be given; a ground of presumption, that the principle which gave occasion to them was in operation from the beginning. We do not allege that there was the same form of sound words obligatory in all churches. On the contrary, we declare, in the language of our 34th Article—"It is not necessary that traditions and ceremonies be in all places one or utterly like; for at all times they have been diverse, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men's manners; so that nothing be ordained against God's word." There was not effected identity of practice in this matter, until, in times far distant from the primitive, it became expedient, for the subjecting of all the churches of Christendom to one dominant see.

6thly. When we extend our views beyond the bounds of Protestantism, the early fathers afford to us abundant proof of the claim of our church to be independent on the dictation or the control of an external jurisdiction. However enormous the power, gradually acquired, of a see dominant over the whole of Christendom, there is not the shadow of a claim to it during the first three centuries. In every diocese, its interests were watched over by its own independent authorities; and although Christian communion was maintained of the churches with one another, yet it was on the ground of a common faith, departure from which was a severance from

the body, independently on the control of a prelatical jurisdiction, held to be obligatory on all.

As for general councils, no such bodies were assembled until toward the end of the ages comprehended within this review, when there was held the Council of Nice, under a perfect equality of its members, and with no distinction of any one member in preference to all the others for the sanctioning of its decrees.

These are facts, for which the earliest documents may be appealed to with entire confidence; and although they add nothing to the truth of Scripture, yet, in establishing the sense of it, they cannot be esteemed lightly, without relinquishing the great advantage derived to our church, by her availing of herself of this help. The only expedient for the wresting of it from us, is by disregarding the distinction between the earlier and the later fathers, contrary to the laws of sound criticism.

Independently on the subjects which have been enumerated, and on which the early ages speak directly in confirmation of the doctrines of our church, there might be mentioned sundry points, on which their testimonies have bearings incidentally, yet much to our satisfaction. One of these is proof of the perpetuity of the sacraments. It is contended by some, that having had their origin in their conformity to certain Jewish customs, they should be considered as limited to the duration of the Jewish commonwealth. They stand on the broad ground of the unlimited commands—"Baptize all nations," and, "Do this in remembrance of me." Yet, because of the pretence referred to, when, in extending our attention to the age following that of the destruction of Jerusalem, after the sound of the preaching of the apostles had "gone out into all lands, and their words unto the end of the world," we find that in every organized church, baptism became the door of admission to a membership of it; and

that in the same extent, sacramental communion was the channel of the continuance of profession ; divine institution, as to perpetuity, is as conspicuous as in any matter in which the truth of our holy religion is implicated.

There may be traced a similar incidental bearing on Christian doctrine, subversive of what was taught in succeeding ages, of worship to be offered to departed saints, supposed to be in heaven antecedently to the resurrection. To make way for the assumption of that inferior grade of mediators, it became necessary to put out of view the intermediate state ; wherein, although the righteous are in peace, waiting for the consummation of bliss in body and in soul, and the wicked reap as they have sown, they are alike reserved to their respective allotments in the judgment of the great day.

It is a doctrine recognized by our church in various places, especially in her burial service. In Scripture, we see it in the case of one of the thieves on the cross ; in what is said of David by St. Peter, in his address to the Jews on the day of Pentecost ; in what we read in the Apocalypse, of the souls under the altar ; and, to omit many other places, in those which speak of the second death, to be endured by some, and delivered from by others.

We do not know of any other denominations than our own, who maintain this discrimination as to our states hereafter ; but it is prominent in the writings of the fathers, for several ages after the beginning of the Christian era. Independently on innumerable authorities which might be produced, there is sufficient evidence of the point in the commemorations of the early martyrs ; the devotions of which contemplated them, not as in heaven, but in a state of bliss, waiting for a joyful resurrection. When we consider, that had the same truth continued to be cherished throughout Christendom, it would have kept the door shut against de-

votions offered to men and women formerly possessed of like passions with ourselves, it adds to our esteem of the ground taken by our church—that of a medium between the elevating of the testimonies of the fathers to an equality with holy Scripture; and the not admitting that they may be of use, in the eliciting of its sense.*

The like bearings might be shown, in reference to the innovated points of transubstantiation, purgatory, and a power of pardon vested in the Gospel ministry. The last particular, as held by the early fathers, was imprecatory. In succeeding times it became absolute; being then, as it is now, a source of self-deception to many, in the solemn crisis of departing life.

Brethren—in discoursing of a characteristic of our communion, derived by us from our mother Church of England, we could not but find our feelings interested, in the crisis in which she stands at present; it being big with uncertainty, as to the changes which she is apparently about to undergo, whether they will be for the better or for the worse. We do not take a part in the political controversies of countries exterior to our own; not excepting the country from which we have inherited our religion, our language and our laws. Without our committing of ourselves to the rashness of such an act, it cannot but be permitted to us, on

* Some have adopted the notion, that the doctrine of an intermediate state is akin to the tenet of a purgatory. Far from this; the latter was the root from which the contrary doctrine to that advocated was a growth. After the endurance of sufferings by persons purged from the dregs of corruption, it seemed reasonable to admit them to the immediate fruition of God. This projected improvement began in the Council of Florence, about the middle of the 15th century; or at least, was not till then matured. For purgatory, Roman Catholic authors find authority, although of a single writer, as early as toward the end of the sixth century.

the ground of our common Christianity, to desire the perpetuity and the integrity of a church, which has long possessed the most conspicuous station among the churches of Protestant Christendom, and from the pens of whose divines there have been presented to the world works high in its esteem, on all the branches of theological literature; and which has especial claims on Episcopalians in the United States, because of its aids extended to their communion in its infancy, in various instances; among which is her being the channel through which there has come to us the Bible in the vernacular tongue. We do not obtrude our opinions on the questions which may arise, relative to the internal economy of our mother church, in matters acted on by discretion, according to existing circumstances. If her institutions, her doctrines being secure, and the essentials of her ministry and of her worship continuing the same, can be improved in the forms of their exhibition; if pecuniary provisions and parochial tenures, perhaps originally wise, have become unsuitable to the altered state of her population; or should her system be in any way susceptible of improvement, without a shock to the foundation, far be from us the thought of discouraging, or of opposing our opinions to such a design. But when communions at the widest distances from one another, are combining in new acts of a hostility long cherished; and when there is seen a coadjutor to them in an increase of infidelity, radically inimical to the profession of religion in any form, especially to its being countenanced by national homage to the great Being, of whom it is said in Scripture, that by him "kings reign and princes decree justice;" comprehensive of civil rulers under whatever name; we perceive nothing in our condition as citizens of our confederate commonwealth, which should hinder the giving of expression to our filial feelings, in the putting up of our prayers, through the merits

of the adorable Head of the universal church, for the perpetuity of the Church of England. In such an act of devotion we solicit the concurrence of the clergy and of the laity in all the departments of our church.

If the dispensations of Providence in reference to our mother church, should be other than what we wish and pray for, that perseverance in her principles in these states may be perpetual, will still be an object of our concern. It is a blessing which will attend her, in proportion as her members, especially her clergy, shall cultivate in their own persons, in their families, and in their ecclesiastical agencies, the rational and evangelical devotion which her institutions are so well adapted to excite and to cultivate. That there may be this result, we now lift our hearts in prayer to the great Being, "from whom all holy desires, all good counsels and all just works proceed."

Signed by order of the House of Bishops,

WILLIAM WHITE, Presiding Bishop.

PASTORAL LETTER No. XI.

FROM THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH, ASSEMBLED IN GENERAL CONVENTION, AT PHILADELPHIA, SEPTEMBER, A. D. 1838.

BRETHREN,

THROUGH the merciful goodness of our heavenly Father, the general convention of our churches has again been permitted to meet in council; and according to our custom and to the canons of our church, we, your bishops, at the close of our deliberations, and at the request of the house of the clerical and lay deputies, address to you this letter on the present state of the churches under our pastoral care; and the duties incumbent on those who desire the promotion of their prosperity and peace.

But, in the performance of this duty our minds are filled with mournful recollections of the past. He who so long presided in our councils, and to whom, with the most reverential regard, we have been accustomed to look, as a father in Israel and a spiritual guide,—he, on whose wisdom and pen we have chiefly depended in expressing our sentiments and advice in these our Pastoral Addresses, has been called from his earthly labours;—his spirit has departed to the church above, and his mortal remains now rest in the tomb.

But though dead he yet speaketh in the excellent productions of his pen, which remain as the lasting monuments of his piety and wisdom. Like the apostle Peter, he has very successfully "endeavoured that we may be able, after his decease, to have in remembrance the things" most essential to Zion's prosperity. On this occasion there is a peculiar fitness in our directing your attention to what he has taught.

We are called on this occasion to lament the decease of another of our Episcopal brethren, the Right Rev. William Murray Stone, D. D., who has been more recently taken from the field of his faithful labours. From our small number have two been taken since our last convention, admonishing us who survive to labour with diligence, and to be also ready.

With thankfulness to the Giver of all good we are permitted to report that others have been added to the house of bishops. Soon after the close of our last convention in 1835, the Rev. Jackson Kemper, D. D., was consecrated to the Episcopal supervision of our churches in the states of Indiana and Missouri, and not long after the Rev. Samuel Allen M'Coskry was ordained Bishop of Michigan.

This convention has been fully attended; the bishops have all been present, and the business has been conducted with much diligence, perfect harmony, and brotherly kindness.

The doings of the convention will be seen in its published journals. As among the things most interesting, we may here mention, that dioceses have been duly organized in Florida, Louisiana, and Indiana, and have all been admitted into a union with this convention. Some new canons have been made and others altered, and, as we trust, improved. We hope soon to have such a code of ecclesiastical law, that further alterations will be seldom needed.

The calls for more episcopal labours and supervision are

many and urgent, and after deliberation and prayer, the house of bishops have nominated and the house of deputies have elected the Rev. Leonidas Polk, of Tennessee, to be a missionary bishop of Arkansas, and whose labours, it is expected, will at first be chiefly bestowed on the vacant dioceses in south-western parts of the United States.

The proposed alteration of our general constitution, so as, under certain restrictions, to allow very large dioceses to be divided, has been adopted ; and the diocese of New York is availing itself of this permission, and taking measures to form a new diocese in the western part of that state, which business, it is expected, will, in November next, be completed.

Your bishops, deeply feeling the need which the church has of more ministers, from a solemn sense of duty request our clergy to present the subject before their respective congregations, exhorting parents and others to give the children under their care such religious education as may lead their thoughts to the Christian ministry, and prepare their minds for its due exercise, and to call upon those who have piety and talents, which are suitable to a right exercise of this sacred office, to consider, with all seriousness and prayer, whether they are not called of God to labour in this work.

The report on the state of our churches, which we have received from the house of clerical and lay deputies, is highly gratifying, and calls for our united thankfulness and praise. Throughout the United States, and especially in the western parts of our country, the number of our clergy and of our churches, and the calls for our ministrations are rapidly increasing.

The advanced age and other infirmities of the bishop of the eastern diocese, has induced the convention of Massachusetts, according to the canon, for such case provided, to elect one to assist him during his life, and to succeed him,

in that state, after his decease. The Rev. Alonzo Potter, D. D., was almost unanimously elected; and it is hoped, that after his return from Europe, which is soon expected, he will accept the appointment.

Among this large body of people composing the present convention, assembled as they are from all parts of the United States, with, as we may suppose, various opinions and conflicting interests, their deliberations on these and many other subjects, have uniformly been conducted with such harmony, peace, and love, as to be a striking and very affecting proof that the Spirit of God has been with us; and it should cause us to bow before him with thankful adoration.

If, in this present address, we again direct your attention to some things which have been noticed in our former letters, let it be remembered that we need line upon line, and that the religious instruction which is most profitable, consists not so much in curious speculations, or the invention of new things, as in the repetition of old and important truths, and in urging again and again those doctrines of Christ, and duties of religion which are the most essential, and the most fatally neglected.

In whatever concerns the order and worship of our church, and the points wherein we are chiefly distinguished from other denominations of Christians, we ever deem it highly important that you should be well instructed and firmly established. But, in our former letters, we have so repeatedly addressed you on these points, and in the most of the addresses, and charges, and pastoral letters, which have been made public in our respective dioceses, we have so often and so fully discoursed on these distinctive principles, that we shall at present suppose that you have less need of instruction in them.

The great object of our ministry, and of all the institu-

tions of our holy religion, is the salvation of men through faith in Jesus Christ, and obedience to the precepts of his Gospel. The chief obstacle to our success is the unwillingness of "the natural man to receive the things of the Divine Spirit;" or, "an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." It has been a common thing in every age, for good men to complain of the wickedness of that in which they lived; and in every age has there been abundant reason for such complaint. In no other age, perhaps, has infidelity and irreligion been more generally and openly avowed in Christian countries than at the present time. But we have the promise that "when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." The fulfilment of this promise is manifest in the signs of the present time; in the increase of religious knowledge and love of Christ; in the decline of bigotry and of persecution; in the extensive circulation of the holy Scriptures; in the vast increase and right application of missionary zeal; and especially in the Protestant Episcopal Church, in an awakened and growing love of evangelical truth. The fulfilment of that promise do we happily experience in the blessing of God upon the means we use, and in the present prosperity of our churches. In regard to externals, certainly the Lord has done great things for us, and much reason have we to thank him, and take courage.

But our thankfulness for his goodness has not, we may well fear, been sufficiently shown, even with our lips; and still less is it seen in our lives. A part only has been done of what the Lord has put it in our power to do, in extending the borders of the Redeemer's kingdom, and promoting true religion. This is evident, not only in the prevalence of vice and irreligion, but in the scantiness of the funds of our domestic and foreign missions; in many unanswered calls

for our ministrations ; in the faithless neglect of the means of grace, and in the want of a holy zeal, and more general and united efforts, in striving together for the faith of the Gospel. Though every good and perfect gift is of Him, "from whom all holy desires, good counsels, and just works do proceed," we are not authorized to expect his favour and blessing but in proportion to our own efforts to obtain his grace and to do his will. We must plant and we must water not the less, but the rather, because that God only gives the increase. As infidelity waxes bold, let the Christian warrior awake to righteousness, and put on the whole armour of God.

What is first necessary, and the most essential to the promotion of religion, and to the increase of our church, and of every thing truly good, is a sound faith in the doctrines of Christ and in the truths revealed in the word of God. What is our natural fallen state, and what the redemption wrought by the Lord Jesus Christ, should be clearly and faithfully taught, cordially received, and well understood. To man, in his natural state of alienation from God, the Gospel brings the good tidings of salvation, revealing that greatest of wonders, how God can be just in justifying those who believe in Christ. If we would be saved in him, and by enlarging the borders of his kingdom, and extending the means of grace, promote the salvation of others, we must build on this only sure foundation. It is of high importance that we have right views of the character of the Saviour, as "the Lord our Righteousness," even the "one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him;" who "for us men, and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was made man," that he might "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." By him, as the Word or Son of God, was the world made ; by him it has been redeemed, and by him shall finally be judged in righteousness. And it is by faith

in him, and the doctrines of his cross, that we may hope to obtain that salvation which is of God, and inherit immortal blessedness. These momentous truths, which the Scriptures fully reveal, and which are clearly expressed in the Articles and Homilies, and other standards of our church, the ministers of Christ are commissioned and sent to teach; and they who would be saved in him should so receive them, as with the heart to believe unto righteousness. 'To some, indeed, they "are a stumbling block, and to others, foolishness;" but to those who rightly view them, they are "the power of God unto salvation."

The minister of Christ goes forth with his commission in his hand, and may not go beyond the word of the Lord his God to say less or more. And to him should the people hearken, as did Cornelius and his friends to Peter, when they said, "We are all here present before God, to hear *all things* which are commanded thee of God." As the one is bound to declare, so are the others to receive "all the counsel of God." The preacher is not allowed to prophesy smooth things, nor to accommodate his doctrine to the wisdom or to the desires of men; his business being not to please, but to save them, he must teach that which humbles the sinner, exalts the Saviour, and gives all glory to God. The Gospel preacher should imitate the faithful physician, who regards not so much the taste of his patients, as the nature of their disease, and prescribes that which will restore them to health, rather than what will give them immediate pleasure. Every congregation of God's people should be aware that when the preacher's words are most delightful to their ears, he may be departing from his duty, and unfaithful to their souls.

There is danger, from the infirmity of our natures, of being too much influenced by a dislike of some doctrines or tenets, or by a partiality for others, and of giving, by forced

construction, to passages of the Scriptures the sense which we prefer, rather than that which the Divine Spirit intended. It is natural, and not uncommon, with serious and well-meaning Christians, to cite chiefly the texts which seem best to agree with their own views; to confirm their favourite creed, or the distinctive principles of their own sect or denomination;—to urge them much, and dwell upon them, while they neglect, or more seldom refer to such passages as seem to be less favourable to their own sentiments. We should be aware of this weakness, and of the evils which it produces, being ever ready and desirous to teach and to hear the truth, and the whole truth, as it is in Jesus Christ, though it may not be according to our own wisdom. Every thing which the Scriptures make essential, whether of faith or of works,—of doctrines or of duties, let us cordially receive. Some Christians prefer to hear chiefly of the doctrines, while others prefer the precepts of the Gospel. To please some, the preacher must dwell most upon what the Lord has done to save them, while others desire chiefly to hear what they must *do* to be saved. One is delighted with reasoning in sermons: another with declamation. Some think it most profitable to dwell on the terrors of the law, while others are satisfied with nothing but the invitations of the Gospel. Let it be remembered that the faithful preacher must give to all their portion of meat; he must keep back nothing which “is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, or for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” He must not be partial in dispensing the word, lest some part of his flock should be sent empty away. And whatever God’s minister is commissioned to teach, let his people devoutly and gladly hear.

The great subject of our preaching is to be “repentance towards God, and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ.”

The morality we teach must be Christian morals. We can build on no other foundation than on Him, "who, of God, is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." We would not that the preaching on moral duties should be underrated: but without that faith which reneweth the heart, and "worketh by love," we can never do, or be, what the Gospel requires. Little good has resulted, or is likely to result, from all the fine things that have been preached on moral rectitude, as unconnected with faith in Christ, and Christian love. What is called natural religion is too obscure to bring life and immortality to light. It is the grace of God bringing salvation in Jesus Christ which renews the heart in hope and love, and constrains men to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." It is the mighty power of the Holy Ghost, accompanying the preaching of Jesus Christ and him crucified, which alone can make men wise unto salvation;—which can show "how man can be just with God," and how God can be just in justifying those who have transgressed his laws; how they who have been dead in trespasses and sins may be pardoned, and accepted, and rewarded, as righteous in the sight of God. There is nothing devised by the wisdom of man which can authorize those who are concluded under sin, to raise their eyes in hope to a reconciled God. No human comforter can pour the balm of forgiveness into the wounds which sin has inflicted, disarm death of its sting, the grave of its victory, and give songs of joy amidst the heaviness of sorrow.

Permit us, then, to repeat and to urge upon your devout consideration, that preaching Christ is the great instrumentality appointed of God, for diffusing the knowledge of eternal life, and renewing the heart with a lively faith and holy affections. We know from experience, and as matter

of fact, that it has this effect. Preachers who in some things differ one from another,—they indeed who in other respects are faulty and erroneous, if they preach the doctrines of the cross,—if they exhibit the Saviour in his true character, and the Scriptural doctrine of justification through faith in him, their preaching is in fact successful in converting souls to God; it is made, through Divine grace, instrumental in renewing the heart by faith, and bringing forth the fruit of good living. Though some should “preach Christ of contention, not sincerely,” God may overrule it to the effecting of some good, and we may well, even in such case, rejoice with an apostle, that *Christ is preached*;—that he is made known to man in his true character of Prophet, Priest and King, and that men do in fact submit to the righteousness of God. But be it carefully remembered, that the less these true doctrines of the cross are mixed with error, in other points, the better will be the effect. From any material error we humbly trust, and may well believe, that the doctrine and worship—the order and discipline of our church are free; and that, if we adhere to our own standards, and are as zealous and faithful as others, none will be more successful.

The belief, we know, has extensively prevailed that we, as a denomination, have not been so decided and faithful as others in teaching and receiving the doctrines of Christ;—that in practice we have deviated from our own articles and homilies. However unfounded we may think this belief to be, it evidently renders it more necessary for us to be explicit, decided and consistent in regard to those doctrines of grace, which are certainly and most fully in our standards maintained.

Let it also be remembered, that “charity endureth all things;” and that when falsely accused, she is “not easily provoked.” Far from being provoked when thus accused,

let us not be hasty in ascribing it to *prejudice* even; but reflect rather whether there may not have been in times past, some ground for such opinion respecting us. When accused of error, it is more safe and more profitable to examine than to justify ourselves. When falsely accused, the best manner of defence is the letting our conduct show the mistake of those who speak against us. The propensity of our fallen nature to notice and to magnify the faults of others, while we are blind to our own, we should also be aware of. As it is the duty of individuals to consider their own faults, rather than their neighbours'; so is it of sects and denominations. Christian charity "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but in the truth:" she is more ready and disposed to notice and to praise what is good in other Christians, than to expose their errors, or to censure their faults:—she believeth and she hopeth all things, which are most favourable to their good motives and Christian character. Our clashing opinions and differing views of religious subjects, as also the censures and the opposition which we meet with from others, are like afflictions, trials of our faith, and patience, and charity. Unreasonable opposition, and censures most unmerited, did our Saviour endure with patience and compassion, and the best of his disciples must expect the like. It is enough for the disciple to be as his master. Had we no trials of this sort, how could we know, or the world know, that the spirit which was in Christ, is also in us? How, without such trials, can we honour our profession, in the exercise of Christian graces?

Respecting your treatment of Christians not of our communion, we would refer you to our letter of 1817, 1823 and 1832. In the present divided state of the church, one of the things most difficult in practice is the conducting of ourselves, as the Gospel requires, towards Christians of other denominations: on the one hand, to contend earnestly for

the true faith ; on the other, to “hold the faith in unity of spirit, and in the bond of peace.” We should so contend for the truth, as to show that *the truth is in us*. It is not more our duty “to banish and drive away from the church all erroneous and strange doctrines, contrary to God’s word,” than it is “to maintain and set forward, as much as lieth in us, quietness, peace and love among all Christian people.” By unsanctified efforts to eradicate the tares from the field of God’s kingdom, the wheat is injured. In contending for small things, weightier matters are too little regarded. We are ever in danger of thinking too well of ourselves, and too ill of others. While we are careful “not to boast of things without our measure,” let it also be remembered that the greater are our advantages, the more perfect our standards of faith and worship, the greater also is the sin of “turning from the holy commandment delivered unto us.

“Quietness, love and peace among all Christian people” is highly essential to the salvation of men and to the prosperity of religion. How many and great are the evils resulting from the dissensions of those who profess and call themselves Christians is too obvious. These, more perhaps than any other fault of Christians, retard the spread of the Gospel. Did they all, as their duty is, unite in faith, and love, and evangelical zeal, the Redeemer’s kingdom would be rapidly extended throughout the earth, and at no distant period would all the ends of the world see the salvation of our God. These divisions cause thousands to doubt, and many to deny the truth of Christianity. They are what chiefly disgrace the otherwise glorious Reformation ; they tend very much to countenance and to perpetuate the idolatrous corruptions against which we justly *protest*, and to diminish that love, among pious believers even, which is “the end of the commandment” and the “bond of perfectness.” It is mournful to see how much, and with what

asperity the disciples of a meek and humble Saviour sometimes contend for light shades of difference, and for things of little or no importance. Such were the things which first and chiefly caused the divisions in the church of England,—things which scarce any now pretend to view as essential parts of religious truth. Those divisions, so long continued and so obstinately maintained, are a mournful proof, that schisms in the church, after having been commenced, are with great difficulty healed. Solemn warnings should they be to us, to let no diversity of opinion, in things not essential, disturb the unity of the church, or cause unfriendly feelings among its members.

The wonderful preservation of the Church of England, and the success of her great and increasing efforts to extend the word of God and the light of truth to various people and nations of the earth, may well excite our thankful admiration. Her present arduous struggle amidst foes and perils, calls for our sympathy and also for our prayers, that He, who has thus far sustained her, and made her the instrument of incalculable good, will continue to be her safeguard and defence.

While speaking on the subject of Christian unity, permit us to observe that your bishops have noticed, with painful concern, that our religious journals, which ought to be to our churches as messengers of peace on earth and good will towards men, diffusing among our people the knowledge of Christ and the love of God, are too much filled with unprofitable controversy; and what is worse, that they not unfrequently manifest a spirit of strife and contention, inconsistent with brotherly kindness and Christian love. It is an evil which in the judgment of some, more than balances all the good which those journals effect. It is injurious to the cause of religion, and to our church especially, causing us to appear before the world, as what we certainly are not,

a divided church. In no other way is the bond of charity oftener broken, and unity disturbed, than by judging illib-
erally of the tenets and practice of others. This is now
the way in which the spirit of persecution chiefly operates.
It is happily, in a great degree, disarmed of its tortures and
flames ; but in slanders, and “ hatred and malice and all
uncharitableness,” it still exists. From which let us pray
in our hearts, as with our lips we do, that the *Lord will
deliver us*. If we have occasion, which we should never
seek, to speak of the errors or failings of any Christians,
meekness, humility, and compassion should possess our
hearts. Ascribing the cause and blame of schisms or dis-
union to others, is more likely to increase than to diminish
the evil ; it is far better to give them good examples of unity
and peace.

It is not necessary to true charity, though much to be
desired, that Christians should be, in every thing, of one
mind ; nor that all should be of the same denomination. We
may love as brethren, though as such we do not commune
together in all the ordinances of Christ. But to be truly his
disciples, it is necessary that we should love those who love
him, and because they love him. It is a profitable and a
pleasing exercise of charity to view with compassion the
errors and mistakes of pious, well-meaning people, and to
love those who love the same Saviour and worship the same
God. When we consider what numbers amongst us scoff
at all religion, and how many, professing to be Christians,
reject what we deem essential doctrines of Christ, “ making
his cross of none effect,” and how many others have dis-
figured the truth and simplicity of the Gospel by the inven-
tions of man, they who happily agree in what is essential,
should delight in cultivating love and living as brethren, not
permitting strifes of words, and questions of expediency to
disunite them.

Our late venerable brother, Bishop White, in his charge on "the Past and Future," which he then considered as his last advice to the people under his pastoral care, has remarks on our feelings and conduct towards those of other denominations, which merit the regard of all our churches. Our endeavour should be to win souls to Christ, by showing that his Spirit dwells within us. "By this," he says, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one towards another." According as we treat others with forbearance, kindness and love, will his work prosper in our hands.

The adherents of the Church of Rome, who are yearly coming amongst us from foreign lands, are, many of them certainly, to be pitied, more than blamed, for their prejudice against Protestants. Let them be treated with kindness and love. Harsh opposition will confirm them in what we deem to be their errors. We shall best convince them of the hope that is in us, and impart to them the knowledge of Christ, by treating them as brethren; by manifesting a sincere desire to do them good, and to promote their salvation through faith in that Saviour who alone is our Advocate with the Father, and the one and only Mediator between God and man. In our lives let them see what are the fruits of the Spirit, and what that "faith which worketh by love." They will judge of the Reformation from the effects it has on those who boast of being reformed. If we Protestants contend among ourselves, and manifest no love for them, what we say of our better knowledge will seem to them as a vain confidence of boasting.

To be ready always, and willing to give to those who ask it, a reason of the hope that is in us, provided it be done, as an apostle directs, "with meekness and fear," will have a good effect in promoting Christian love and true religion.

The divided state of professed Christianity makes it very much our duty to examine well what we teach, and what we believe, and also what are the tenets and distinctive principles of differing denominations of Christians among whom we live; that, while we treat them all with Christian love, we may associate with those who are most conformable to what our Saviour taught and his apostles practised. Frank and friendly conversation on the doctrines of Christ, and the duties of religion, will be profitable to yourselves and to them. By carefully ascertaining what are the views and belief of others, prejudices will in some cases be removed, and charity increased. The propensity of our nature to justify ourselves, and obstinately to defend our own opinions, often excites unkind feelings and unprofitable controversy; but these evils will be avoided if you maintain your opinions with *meekness and fear*. Meekness and humility, which are essential to the Christian character, our Saviour has carefully taught us by precept and example. By pride, man fell from his first estate; and it is the greatest obstacle to his restoration to the favour of God. "Whatsoever harm there is," says the judicious Hooker, "in private families:—whatsoever, by strife amongst men combined in the fellowship of greater societies;—by tyranny of potentates, ambition of nobles, or by heresies, schisms, and divisions in the church; naming pride, we name the mother which brought them forth, and the only nurse that feedeth them. Give me the hearts of all men humbled, and what is there that can overthrow or disturb the peace of the world? Many things are the cause of much evil; but pride, of all." A wiser than Hooker has said, "only by pride cometh contention:" and He who is infinitely wise, declares, "pride I hate." The disciple of that Saviour who was eminently *meek and lowly*, should be "peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy,

&c., without partiality," showing all due respect to the opinions of our fellow-men.

In discoursing on religious subjects we have need not only of *meekness* and humility, but of religious awe and godly *fear*. Religion often suffers much through want of reverence in those who discourse upon it. In speaking on such subjects as the state, and the immortal destinies of ourselves and all mankind;—on the word and the will of God—the work of redemption—the character of the Saviour—the doctrines of his cross, and the means of grace, we have surely reason to *fear*, lest we should be influenced by pride or self-will; lest, like the friends of Job, we should *not speak of God the thing that is right*.

The spirit of meekness, and of benevolence, and of liberality, truly so called, is remarkably manifest in the institutions of our church; and happy will it be if all its members imbibe this spirit, equally free from enthusiasm, bigotry, and superstition. This, with union and love among ourselves, and a holy zeal in imparting to others a knowledge of Christ, is necessary to our prosperity and the more rapid increase of our churches. A thankful sense of God's mercy in Jesus Christ will naturally increase our brotherly affection;—we shall feel that "if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

There is danger of an undue reliance upon the soundness of our creeds, and the excellency of our order, and worship and discipline. They who have the word of God, and the practice of the earliest Christians in their favour, naturally incline to rely too much upon their orthodoxy. Supposing that truth will support itself, or that it can easily be defended, they are more remiss in the Lord's work; while they who broach novelties, or make innovations, or teach unsound principles, depend more upon their zeal and activity. We would not recommend to you zeal without

knowledge, nor the proselyting arts of sectarianism ; but that holy energy and manly zeal in the cause of truth ; that rational and persuasive earnestness which evidently becomes those who believe in Christ ; who would live and act in the fear of God, and do works suitable for those who are labouring for eternity. Our orthodoxy should be seen in the doctrines we teach, the faith we profess, and the fruit which it produces. If we are blest with more or better privileges than some other Christians, we are bound to excel them as much in all virtue and godliness of living. A correct creed is good, but a godly life is better. People will judge of us, and their Saviour has taught them to judge of us, by our fruits. "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit." What the tree is, the fruits will show.

It should be carefully understood that "we do not, through faith, make void the law." We are required to work out that salvation which is by faith. We preach the doctrines of grace, not to render good living the less necessary, but to produce such works as God requires, and has promised to bless. We are to do what he commands ; to show not our own righteousness, nor our merits, but our faith and love, and that we are obedient children. Salvation is not the less of grace, or the less free, because something is required of us "*to do to be saved.*" The doctrine of our church is, we trust, the doctrine of the Scriptures, "that good works are the fruits of faith—that they do spring out necessarily of a true and lively faith, insomuch that by them a lively faith may as evidently be known as a tree discovered by the fruit." Obedience is the best evidence of conversion : a new heart is evinced by good works ; a sound faith by a holy life.

We would particularly recommend, and urge upon those who believe in Christ, and desire the salvation which is of God, a right and faithful observance of the Christian ordi-

nances; and particularly Baptism, Confirmation, and the Lord's Supper. These you should view not merely as duties, much less as a burden, but as great and inestimable privileges mercifully ordained, in compassion of our weakness, to strengthen our faith, and increase in us true religion. Use them as sanctified means of obtaining God's heavenly benediction; not as supposing that the observance of them is meritorious, or any evidence of your own righteousness, but rather as a declaration before the church, and before the world, of your trust in the redemption and the merits of Jesus Christ, and of your desire to draw near to God, in the way and by the means of his own appointment.

Though in these United States our number is small compared with the other denominations around us, let it not be forgotten, that in all the points which we deem essential to Christianity, we agree with what has been, and still is, held by far the greater part of Christians throughout the world. It is our duty, certainly, to labour in that way which we believe to be according to the word and will of God. In reforming the church from the corruptions which had accumulated through its darker ages, many Protestants, for various reasons, and with differing views, have rejected some things which in our view are essential, and we dare not reject them. In those things of course we differ, and with regret are constrained to differ from many, who, we doubt not, are pious believers in Jesus Christ. It is not for us to judge them; but we must take heed to ourselves, and adhere steadfastly to what we believe to be the truth as it is in Jesus Christ. This truth we are cordially to receive and faithfully to teach. If others *walk not with us*, God will be their judge: "to their own master let them stand or fall." Let us endeavour "both by our life and doctrine, to set forth his true and lively word," and to "stand fast in one spirit and with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel:"

let us respect and love all Christian people, but not turn aside to the right hand or to the left, from the straight and narrow way which leads to life. Let it be manifest that we are a church of Christ, by building on him, the only true foundation, and "holding the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life." Let our church be the happy resort and refuge of all who love the Lord Jesus Christ; who willingly submit to his righteousness, and desire to live in harmony and love. To the doctrines of his cross, and to all the essentials of his Gospel we must steadfastly adhere, not turning aside to accommodate the taste or the views of any sect or individual; but to all who will build on the true foundation of "one Lord, one faith, one baptism," let the doors of his church be ever open. Let us "be so merciful that we be not too remiss, and so administer discipline that we do not forget mercy," nor take from any one the liberty wherewith Christ has made him free. So far as the truth of God will admit, would we "become all things to all men," and bring every penitent, believing soul into the pale of his church, that all may be of one fold, under one Shepherd. Our care should be, by teaching and by example, to exhibit this "house of God as the pillar and ground of the truth," "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

We would also recommend, as what will contribute much to the increase of the church, and the happiness of its members, the cultivation of mutual love and brotherly kindness between the ministers of Christ and the people of their pastoral charge. This interesting relation is, we fear, at the present time, losing something of its very salutary influence. And this, we cannot doubt, is in part, if not chiefly caused, by the frequent removals of clergymen from their parishes, contrary to the warm affection, and earnest desires of their flocks, and sometimes, perhaps, in violation of solemn en-

gagements. We know, and we deeply regret the pecuniary exigencies, which, in many cases, seem to constrain our clerical brethren to this painful measure. But we fear, that, in cases not a few, they yield too easily, and too soon, to discouraging circumstances; and that in some instances they are influenced by motives and views of a worldly nature. Is there not amongst us a too general deficiency of trust in Him who is the head of the church, and the Bishop of our souls?—In Him who has promised, to his ministers especially, that if they “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” the things necessary for their temporal comfort shall be added unto them? The many and great evils resulting from such frequent removals are evident and well known. To remedy or diminish these evils, the people who are blest with the labours of a worthy, faithful pastor, should be thankful for so great a blessing, and do all that is reasonably in their power to strengthen his hands, and to aid him in his labours, that he may exercise his ministry “with joy, and not with grief.” And let the ministers of Christ trust more in Him whose ministers they are; let them not be soon or easily discouraged because all things are not according to their mind, nor because they see not much fruit from their labours. They who truly labour in the Lord, will not labour in vain. Let them labour also in patience, willing and praying that the Lord’s will may be done. Our willingness to suffer for the Lord’s sake, is an evidence that we are truly his. Let the clergy, according to the example and precept of the apostles, endeavour, by good economy and frugal living, not to be more burthensome to the people than is necessary. This is daily becoming more the duty of Christ’s ministers, and the more necessary to the prosperity of religion, on account of the increasing divisions of the people into smaller societies of various denominations, by which

preachers are multiplied, and the burthen of supporting them is increased.

The length to which this letter is extended, constrains us to omit much that we would have added on the subject of prayer. You do not, we trust, need to be reminded that the constant, earnest, and faithful performance of this duty is, more than any one thing, necessary to the promotion of godliness and the increase of true religion. Except the Lord build the house, in vain shall we labour to build it. The work is his, and without his grace to direct and bless our efforts, we can effect nothing good. It is according as we trust in God, looking to him in prayer, and seeking for his aid in the way of his own appointment, that we may hope that his work will prosper in our hands. "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is." Let the services of our church be regularly attended, and, by ministers and people, duly performed. "Brethren, pray for us." If the holy apostles, with all their gifts and graces, needed the prayers of Christians, that the word of God might have free course, and their ministry be blest, much more do we need your earnest supplications to God the Father, through Jesus Christ, that his Spirit may be with us, and that we may have wisdom and grace to exercise the office committed to our trust, to the glory of God, the increase of his church, and the salvation of his people.

By order of the House of Bishops,

ALEXANDER V. GRISWOLD,

President of the House of Bishops.

PASTORAL LETTER No. XII.

FROM THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL
CHURCH, ASSEMBLED IN GENERAL CONVENTION AT NEW
YORK, OCTOBER, A. D. 1841.

BRETHREN AND FRIENDS, BELOVED IN THE LORD :

It again becomes the duty of your bishops, being assembled with your clerical and lay deputies in general convention, and at their request, to address to you a pastoral letter on the state of our churches.

Since the last meeting of this convention, it has pleased the Lord, in his merciful goodness, to continue them generally in a state of prosperity and increase. But with deep feelings of sorrow we find another vacant seat in our house. We have to lament the decease of our much respected brother, the Right Rev. Nathaniel Bowen, D. D., who, in the midst of his useful labours, departed this life on the 25th of August, 1839.

Still, in the midst of judgment, the Lord remembers mercy. We are happy in being able to report, that, through his goodness, no less than six others have been added to our number. The Right Rev. Leonidas Polk, D. D., was consecrated to the Episcopal office in 1838, as Missionary Bishop of the South West, having for his jurisdiction, Arkansas, and some part of the Indian Territory, with the pro-

visional supervisions of the Dioceses of Alabama and Louisiana. And at the request of our foreign missionary committee, he has extended his visitations to the Republic of Texas, of which we have been favoured with interesting information.

The Right Rev. William H. Delancey, D. D., was consecrated Bishop of Western New York, on the 9th of May, 1839; under whose administration that new diocese is highly prosperous.

The Right Rev. Christopher E. Gadsden, D. D., the successor of our much lamented brother, Bishop Bowen, was ordained to the Episcopate of South Carolina, on the 21st of June, 1840.

The Right Rev. Wm. R. Whittingham, D. D., was consecrated Bishop of the Diocese of Maryland, September 17th, 1840.

The Right Rev. Stephen Elliott, jun., D. D., was, on the 28th of February last, ordained Bishop of Georgia.

And during the session of this convention, the Rev. Alfred Lee, D. D., has been ordained Bishop of Delaware.

You will, we doubt not, rejoice with us, and bless God for these additions to our apostolic ministry; and that they have been made with unanimity, and to the great satisfaction of the churches over which they are appointed to preside; and for the lively hope which we already have, that the work of God will prosper in their hands. Our brethren now, in all parts of the United States, have the benefit of Episcopal supervision.

We would again "write unto you of the common salvation" which is in Jesus Christ, "and exhort you, that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once," by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, "delivered unto the saints," and faithfully perform those things which are required in the word of God, that we may obtain eternal life.

The religion taught us in the holy Scriptures may be in-

cluded under two heads:—What we must *believe*, and what we must *do*. Under the former head is included a belief in all things respecting our religious hope, and final salvation, which are revealed to our understanding in God's holy word; such as the creation and fall of man; the character of the Saviour, and what he has done to redeem us from sin and eternal death; the merits and other doctrines of his cross; the institution and nature of his church and its ministry; the number and efficacy of his sacraments; the persons of the Deity; the agency of the Divine Spirit, and the life and immortality brought to light in the Gospel, which his ministers are sent to preach. These are among the principal things which we are to believe, and which are essential to that faith which is required of those who would have a sure hope of salvation in Jesus Christ.

But the great practical question for those who have this faith, the question, which, in different forms, was often put to Christ and his apostles, and which his ministers still should be willing and prepared to answer to all who ask it, and to all who have ears to hear, is, *What must we do to be saved?* This, in the same Scriptures, we are clearly and so fully taught, “that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.”

Our church has taught in her Catechism what are “the first principles of the doctrine of Christ,” and in her Articles and Homilies, what is most necessary to the obtaining of a sure hope of salvation in Jesus Christ, and to the perfection of the Christian character. The more carefully you, as Christ commands, “search the Scriptures,” the more will you see and have cause to admire the wisdom and piety of those holy men, who were instrumental in reforming the Church of England, and who compiled, on true scriptural

grounds, articles of faith, and a book of common prayer. Since this branch of the "one Catholic and Apostolic church," to which we have the happiness to belong, became independent of the Church of England, in its ecclesiastical polity, our fathers of the American Episcopal church, as we may now well call them, made some few alterations and improvements, that our worship and discipline may be better adapted to the state of this country, and the manners of the age; but, as you may easily see, they have carefully adhered to the sure word of God.

But though all Christians may agree that our religion is included under the two heads:—What are we required to believe, and what to do, that we may be saved in Jesus Christ? On the comparative importance of these two parts, and what influence they have in our justification and acceptance with God, there is unhappily some diversity of opinion, to which we deem it expedient to ask your attention. Many Christians, indeed, seem to find some difficulty in reconciling or in clearly understanding what the Scriptures teach of faith and of works. To remove any doubts or uncertainty of this kind must evidently be of high importance.

The principle or ground on which we are accepted of God, and may hope to be blest in heaven as righteous in his sight, is what chiefly distinguishes Christian theology from all other religions. On the much controverted question, what influence our works have in our justification, some have erroneously thought, that the apostles even are not wholly agreed: as when one "concludes that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law;" and another, "that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." But not only are the apostles, on this momentous doctrine, agreed, but among Christians truly pious, the difference is probably less than is generally supposed.

The Scriptures teach us that man is naturally in a fallen,

sinful state, from which God, in his merciful goodness, sent his Son to redeem us. By the sacrifice of himself, he made expiation for our sins : by rising from the dead, he has raised our hopes to life immortal ; and through faith in him, as “ the way, the truth, and the life,” as our advocate with the Father, and “ the end of the law for righteousness to those who believe,” we are authorized to look for pardon and acceptance.

This is, indeed, an “ unspeakable gift :”—it is a work of mercy and grace which passes man’s understanding, and that Christians of honest hearts and sincere piety, should have views somewhat different respecting what is required of men, that they may obtain the salvation offered us in the Gospel, is a matter of regret rather than of surprise. Respecting the counsels of God in the vast work of redemption, we know in part only, and can prophesy but in part. In that plan of Divine love which clothed “ the Lord from heaven” in human flesh, there are *depths of wisdom and knowledge*, which no genius of man can in this life wholly investigate, nor human reason fathom. God is graciously pleased to reveal to our understanding, what is necessary for us to know during this present life ; and with this should we be contented, and for it thankful ; not indulging any presumptuous curiosity, nor pretending to be wise beyond what is written for our learning.

They who carefully read the holy Scriptures, cannot be ignorant that salvation is of grace ;—that it is not of works, lest any man should boast, and that we are justified through faith in the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. Nor is it less evident that we are required to *work out our salvation*,—to *save ourselves*,—to *make our calling and election* sure. These, and other like passages, all appertain to the sure Word of God, and that is their true sense

which reconciles them, and shows their agreement with each other, and with the whole of the sacred volume.

In searching the Scriptures, our great desire should be to know what God has taught, uninfluenced by what we may prefer, and without any attempt to circumscribe "the power of God and the wisdom of God" within the narrow limits of our own understanding. If we search the Scriptures for texts or for arguments to confirm what appears to us the most reasonable, or what we have already adopted as our opinions, we shall be less likely to come to the knowledge of "all the counsel of God." Sincere and pious Christians, by regarding chiefly what certainly merits very much regard, the gratuitous dispensations of God's mercy in Christ,—the hopeless spiritual state of fallen man,—the predominance of his selfish, worldly and carnal affections; and many passages of God's word, which speak of our works as unprofitable to God, and in his sight without merit, may naturally be led to make too little account of good living, and of what we must do to be saved. A simple belief in the merits of Christ may be so relied upon as to "make void the law through faith." Others may incline to an opposite and not less dangerous error. By giving their chief attention to passages, of which there are also very many, that teach the necessity of obedience to God's word; that all will be judged and finally rewarded or punished according to their works done in this world; and that they who live in wilful violation of God's laws, shall not inherit his heavenly kingdom;—by considering further what encouragement the Scriptures give, and what blessings and reward they promise to those who "live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world," they are no less naturally led to place undue reliance upon what they deem good works and the merits of their obedience to "the holy commandment given unto them;" they are in danger

of dishonouring the doctrines of grace,—of degrading the merits of Christ, as a perfect and complete Saviour. Too little may be allowed to faith, as the principle on which we are accepted of God.

St. Paul in his epistles, in those especially to the Romans and Galatians, shows the anti-Christian tendency of this latter error; shows that we cannot be accounted righteous for the merits of our obedience to the laws of God;—but on the contrary, that our transgression of his laws is what condemns us; it is what shows that we are sinners. By the law is the knowledge of sin: even “when we would do good, evil is present with us.” It is from this curse of the law that Christ has redeemed us. This apostle shows that no works which we can do are so good and perfect, that they will merit acceptance with God and eternal life. But St. Paul nowhere teaches that we are justified by a dead or inactive faith:—by a faith which does not bring forth the fruit of good living. He speaks of that lively faith which renews the heart, and produces obedience to what the Gospel requires; and how it is that we, who are concluded under sin, may be accepted as righteous. He shows the error of those who expect salvation as the reward of what they do. “The most holy and faithful Christian has no foundation for hope to rest upon, but the merits of his crucified Saviour. From God “all holy desires, good counsels and just works do proceed;” it is he who makes us, in any thing which is good, to differ from others; by his grace we are what we are.

It appears that St. Paul’s remarks on the doctrines of grace were misunderstood in his day, as they also have been in ours. They were considered, St. Peter says, as hard to be understood, and were wrested from their true sense to the support of error. We have also reason to believe that others of the apostles, as Peter and James, John

and Jude, designed, in their epistles, to rectify the erroneous notions, which some Christians even then began to entertain respecting the necessity of godly living;—"to vindicate, (as St. Augustine says,) the true doctrine from the false consequences charged upon it, and to show that faith without works is nothing worth." St. James, in his bold manner and strong language, speaks very decidedly on this point;—he shows the dangerous error of supposing that a mere belief in Christ rendered the works, which God's word requires of believers, unnecessary, or that we can have a good hope of being saved in Christ, while we neglect what Christ himself commands.

Faith is required, not as a substitute for good living, but rather as necessary to our living according to the word and will of God. The works which the Gospel of Christ requires, that men may be saved, they cannot, or certainly they would not perform without a belief in him as their Saviour. Who could truly pray in the name of Christ, or in his name, and from love to him, give a cup of water, if he does not believe in him? St. James teaches what St. Paul taught, that we do not through faith make void the law. The unprofitableness of faith, without submission to God's righteousness, he illustrates by the case of one who should give the needy nothing but fair words and empty wishes:—"Be ye warmed and clothed." There is no more of true justifying faith in believing the Scriptures to be the word of God, while we live in the neglect of what they teach, than there is of charity in knowing the wants of the poor, while we refuse or neglect to relieve them. St. James teaches us that the faith which justifies, is a living faith, fruitful of good works;—it is that faith of the heart, by which "man believeth unto righteousness." St. Paul teaches the same doctrine when he says, "Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have

not charity, I am nothing." And again, "If ye live according to the flesh, ye shall die ; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Our Saviour teaches this doctrine when he says, "Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father." And Peter says to the same purpose, "It is better not to know the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment." He shows the necessity of adding to our faith, virtue,—knowledge,—temperance,—patience,—godliness,—brotherly-kindness,—charity: "If"—he says—"ye do these things, ye shall never fall."

A careful study of the holy Scriptures, with prayer, will convince you of their perfect harmony and agreement on the doctrine of faith and works. You have but to observe well, in what sense we are justified by faith only ; and also how it is that good living is essential to our salvation in Christ. By the apostles, Paul and James, you are warned of two opposite errors. By the former you are taught not to rely on any works which you do, as profitable to salvation, but such as are wrought in a Christian faith ; while the other shows that faith, without the works which the Gospel requires, is unavailing. This doctrine he had learned from his Divine Master, who was careful to teach that the tree is known by its fruits ; that the man whose heart is truly renewed by a lively faith in Christ, will show it by his submission to God's righteousness ; "will show his faith by his works."

The agreement of those two apostles is made more evident by their appealing to the case of Abraham's readiness, in obedience to God's command, to offer his son in sacrifice. St. Paul shows that what rendered that act of obedience acceptable, was Abraham's belief in God's word, and trust in his promises. Had he done the same thing of his

own will, supposing it meritorious, like them who offered their children to Moloch, and like myriads of other self-righteous people, who think to gain heaven by useless sufferings, and "voluntary humility," it would have been sinful. And St. James with equal truth shows, that if Abraham had not obeyed God's command, his faith would not have been reckoned to him for righteousness, he would not have been honoured as the Father of the Faithful, and as "the Friend of God;" he would not have heard from heaven these most comforting and gracious words: "Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son—thy only son, from me." "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord; for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son—thy only son,—that in blessing I will bless thee, — because thou hast obeyed my voice." "Faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect." Abraham's obedience was the fruit, and of course the evidence, of a lively faith. By these fruits it was manifest to the world, that with his heart he believed unto righteousness; that he would sooner hope against hope than doubt whether the word of God is true. God in his wisdom and goodness has been pleased to set before us this very remarkable case of the obedience of faith, for an example and encouragement to his people to the end of the world. We are called to no trials greater than that, and in what trials, then, should we turn from the commandment given unto us? Let our faith be thus fruitful. Regard carefully what St. Paul shows you in Abraham's example, that it is faith in Christ and in the word of God, which renders your works religious and good. And learn, too, from the same example, that you are not authorized to hope that your faith in Christ is truly religious, and will of God be accounted to you for righteousness, except it bring forth in you the obedience

which Christ himself requires. From one apostle you learn, that what renders you acceptable to God is the renewal of your mind—the conformity of your heart to God's word and revealed will : and from another you learn, that your heart is not truly renewed or conformed to God's word and will, unless you obey what he commands.— They unite in teaching you not to trust in your own righteousness ; but to submit to that righteousness which is by faith in the Son of God ;—that a religious faith and a holy life are both necessary to a lively hope : they are as the soul and the body of pure and undefiled religion, and death is the consequence of their separation. They teach you to place your hope of pardon and peace with God, in his mercy obtained through the redemption and merits of Jesus Christ, while at the same time they lift their warning voice against your making that hope, or trust, or faith, or any notion of your being justified, or of God's elect, for living carelessly or neglecting to work out your own salvation. What God has joined together, let no man put asunder. You can not safely trust in any faith, or “ all faith,” to save you, which does not produce obedience to the Gospel ; nor in any works which you can do, except that they are wrought in God, and are the fruit of your faith in Christ. “ Whatever is not of faith is sin.”

This doctrine of faith and works you may find to be fully taught and sustained in the Articles and Liturgy, and in all the standards of our church. She has taken the true mean or middle way between the two opposite extremes, and is careful to teach you not to turn to the right hand or to the left.

We are truly said to be justified by faith and to be saved by faith, because, as the apostles show, our faith it is which renders our works pleasing to God ; because, indeed, it is by faith only that we can truly do what God requires, and

be conformed to his will. The works required of Christians show, not our merits, but our belief in Him, who is truly meritorious, and our hope and trust in the word and promises of God; they should be intended to manifest not that salvation is of us, but that we seek for and accept it as the free gift of God. By faith, we receive Christ as "the Lord our Righteousness." It is a belief in what God has revealed, a trust in what he has promised, and a lively sense that all the glory of our salvation is his alone. It is "not of works, lest any man should boast." But so far is this faith from excluding the necessity of repentance and hope and charity and good living, that it is what produces them. It is the good tree, which, as our Lord says, brings forth good fruit; and the wisdom of God in requiring it, as the principle of our justification, is evident. It is thus required not because faith is the greatest of all Christian virtues or graces;—charity is greater than faith. What gives to faith its exalted rank in the religion of Christ is its truth. It sees no merit but in Jesus Christ: it humbles the sinner, exalts the Saviour, and gives all glory to God; and also, through his grace, it enables the Christian to "walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

And here, too, as St. James says, "you see how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." "The tree is known by its fruits;" "by works is faith made perfect;" its fruitfulness and its life are shown. We are justified by works, as being the fruits which make faith valuable. Hence it is said that we shall be judged according to our works, or according to the fruit which our faith produces. "He that soweth little shall reap little, and he that soweth plenteously, shall reap plenteously."

It is remarkable and much to our present purpose that St. Paul, in speaking of what *will avail*—what the Lord requires that we should be and do that we may be saved in

Jesus Christ, says, in one place, "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." But in another place he says, "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God." And yet in a third passage he declares, "In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love." Here it may seem to some that the apostle is not consistent with himself—that he advances three discordant principles respecting our acceptance with God; but in truth not only do these three agree in what avails to our salvation in Christ, but they very much confirm the view of a living faith, which in this letter we would commend to your devout consideration. For the "new creature," mentioned in one of these passages, is what circumcision did, and baptism now does represent: it is the "new birth unto righteousness," "the inward part or thing signified" by those rites. *Faith* is the gift or grace by which the heart is *renewed*. We are begotten again by the word of truth. God purifies the heart by faith: Christians are sanctified by the faith that is in them. Faith, therefore, avails as producing the new creature; and as "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness," "the keeping the commandments of God" also avails. These are works by which faith is made perfect—the fruit of a living faith—a faith, says the apostle, "which *worketh*," which influences our conduct—produces that obedience to God's word, without which faith is dead.

There may, indeed, be an *active* faith, and yet the fruits not good. Faith, in many instances, has produced prejudice, bigotry and divisions. Actuated by a blind belief and ungodly zeal, Christians have been guilty of a thousand persecutions. Will such a faith avail?—a faith which produces "envy, hatred and malice, and all uncharitable-

ness?" which swells the heart with spiritual pride? which breaks out in a fiery zeal for a sect, excites party spirit, and makes men more uncharitable? Not so: that which avails is "faith which worketh *by love*." By such works it is that faith is made perfect. With this addition, you have a comprehensive view of what is necessary to your salvation in Jesus Christ. "Love is the fulfilling of the whole law:" it is the moral principle which the Gospel is intended to produce and to cherish in the hearts of men, and by which we are best known to be the disciples of Christ.

That faith *avails* to our salvation the Scriptures abundantly teach; a *new creature avails*, as being the sanctified state of a believing soul: it is the inward disposition to hate sin, to love God and obey his word, which is called a new birth, and without which no man can see the kingdom of God; and of course keeping God's commandments avails, because, as we have seen, it is the fruit of faith—the work done by the new creature. A lively faith in Jesus Christ disposes the Christian to live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world: it does no ill to any one, for it *worketh by love*. In these passages of the apostle you have a guide to the knowledge of your own Christian state. If you have faith which worketh by love in keeping God's commandments, you may well trust that you are "born of God." "Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God; if we love one another, God dwelleth in us; hereby we know that we dwell in him and he in us."

In viewing this subject of what you must believe and what you must do, that you may be saved with an everlasting salvation, you should carefully remember that neither faith nor works is the meritorious cause of your salvation. "By *grace* ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." We are said to be saved

by faith, and to be justified by it rather than by our works, not only because, as we have seen, it is that which alone can produce the works required of us, but chiefly because, through the operations of the Divine Spirit, it is a conviction of sin, of righteousness and of judgment; it is a belief that we are included under *sin*; that Christ is the end of the law for *righteousness* to those who believe in him, and that a day of *judgment* is approaching when we must all give account of the works done in this present life. Faith moves us to seek for life eternal as the gift of God through the merits of Christ, and to render all glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

This subject rightly considered will teach you profitably to use the means of grace. Because circumcision now avails nothing, you must not infer that the Christian ordinances are of but little importance—that without peril to your soul you may neglect baptism, or confirmation, or the Lord's Supper, or prayer. By a *right* use of these means, as our church teaches and the Scriptures teach, your faith will be strengthened and grace increased. God has commanded the use of them, and they who neglect them must either think that they are wiser than God, or they must be in want of that faith which produces obedience to his commands.

The ordinances appointed by our Saviour Christ and administered by his apostles, should not be viewed merely as duties, but rather as blessed privileges which claim our thankfulness to God. In mercy to mankind and to help our infirmities, they are given us as sanctified means of bringing us to himself, and by which we may obtain his heavenly benediction.

Your bishops ask your attention to this subject the rather, because, in our visitation of the churches under our care, we are often and much pained in observing how large a part of

the people of our congregations appear to be in doubt, or undecided respecting the use of these means ; how many of them live in the neglect of making an open and public profession of their faith in Christ and submission to his righteousness : and this we the more regret, from considering that not a few of them manifest a sincere regard for religion and a serious sense of its importance. Their morals, too, and their lives in other respects, are in a happy degree, such as we desire to see in the disciples of Christ. They appear to have a reverence for God and right views of the Saviour's character and office ; and they show such benevolence and charity towards their fellow men, that we may say of thousands what Christ said to one, "*They* are not far from the kingdom of God." Our sorrow is that they are not visibly in his kingdom. For reasons known perhaps to themselves and to God only, they do not confess Christ before men and become members of his church. While they so continue, they are not *assured* of God's favour and goodness towards them, "and that *they* are members incorporate in the mystical body of his Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people." Into a church so apostolic as this, having a faith so primitive, doctrines so evangelical, a worship so scriptural, and other institutions so truly liberal, we might reasonably hope to see people crowding as doves to their windows.

Our Saviour Christ sent his ministers to preach, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved ;" and so far as we know of their acts and their history, they who did believe immediately made that profession of their faith. It is also evident in the acts of the apostles that they confirmed baptized believers by laying their hands upon them, and praying for the aid of God's Holy Spirit to strengthen them in the performance of their baptismal engagements, and enable them to "lead the rest of their lives according to

that beginning." And it is the request and the command of your Saviour that you receive the other sacrament *in remembrance of him*, in a thankful and devout commemoration of his "one sacrifice for sin." In that sacrament you show forth his death—you manifest your faith in the merits of his cross, and your thankfulness for such unspeakable mercy. By faithfully receiving these memorials of his love, you are also authorized to hope for the strengthening of your souls by the spiritual efficacy of his body and blood, broken and shed for your sins, as your bodies are by the bread and wine.

Some seem to think that the rivers of Damascus are better than the waters of Israel, or that if they live honest and good lives they shall not be the worse for neglecting religious ceremonies. And who does truly live an honest and good life? Who loves God with all his heart and soul and mind, and his neighbour as himself? Who has in all things done to others as he would have others do to him? In many things we all offend: there is none good but one. Christ died to save, and his Gospel is sent to call "not the righteous but sinners." Are you so whole that you need not this Divine physician? We might remind you of the inestimable benefits, visibly signed and sealed in baptism, to those who rightly receive it. We might say much to you of the fitness and Divine authority of confirmation, and the blessings which have evidently attended its right and faithful ministration. We might show that communing in the Lord's Supper is a great comfort to those who believe in Christ, and that it strengthens them much in their Christian zeal. But is it not enough to know that it is the will of your Saviour Christ that you should submit to his ordinances?—that he, who so loved your soul as to die for its salvation, has appointed his sacraments for your benefit? Such a Saviour, you may well believe, has not ordained rites which are unnecessary,

or which may safely be neglected; nor has he required you to do that which is useless. Our wisdom, when opposed to God's word, is but foolishness. He has "chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the mighty." When some inquired of Christ, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God; he answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." We are to believe in him as the great *Prophet*—as the word or wisdom of God, by whom the Divine will is made known to men; and as the only true *Priest* who has made expiation for our sins, and ever lives to make intercession for us. "Through him we have access, by one Spirit, unto the Father." And we are to believe in him as our *King*, unto whom all power was given in heaven and in earth. Him we are bound in all things to obey. He is "made both Lord and Christ;" and well may he ask, as he does, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" While we disobey his commands, by our actions we deny that he is Lord; we rebel against him.

But there is an opposite error which is no less carefully to be avoided. There is little use in drawing nigh to God with our lips, if our hearts are far from him. Our church is faithful to declare, what the Scriptures clearly teach, that "the sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon,—but that we should duly use them. In such only as worthily receive the same, they have a wholesome effect or operation." And she is faithful also in warning us of the peril of receiving them unworthily. In using the means of grace, *according to your faith it will be done unto you*. We may err in making not only too little, but in making too much of external rites. There is a sense in which neither receiving baptism, nor neglecting it, will avail. The outward performance of religious rites will not be profitable,

without the sincere co-operation of the mind and affections. The ordinances of the Gospel are to be observed, as the consecrated channels of God's grace to your soul; as the means whereby you may hope to receive his heavenly benediction. We should use them in faith and submission to God, making no account of our own righteousness; but remembering that "Jesus Christ is of God made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption; that according as it is written," by the prophet Jeremiah, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

It is a very essential part of religious knowledge to have right views of all the means of grace, and with what intention, and what faith and hopes, you observe them. They are as instruments put into your hands, by the right use of which, you obtain what is truly good. If we ask, we shall receive; if we seek as the Lord directs, we shall find. They are as a test of our faith, and they manifest that we seek for salvation as being the free gift of God. It is in compassion of our weakness, and to help our infirmities, that they are appointed. And the doctrine that you are saved by grace—that you cannot of yourselves and in your own natural strength turn to God, and be and do what he requires, without his aid, far from discouraging those who desire to be saved in Christ, should enliven your hope, and cause you the rather to strive to enter in at the straight gate. Accordingly St. Paul urges this most comforting truth, that "God works within you to will and to do," as the reason why you should "work out your own salvation." We preach the doctrines of grace to render your hope of salvation more lively and sure. We can do all things, Christ strengthening us, and his strength he is more ready to give than we to seek for it by prayer, and by the use of those means which he has appointed and blessed for that purpose.

This doctrine that salvation is not of ourselves but is the

gift of God, increases our thankfulness. Did we suppose it to be of us, that it is due to our merits, or within our natural power, that we can sanctify our own hearts and by our own strength become what God's word requires, we should feel self-sufficient, and arrogate to ourselves the honour which belongs to God only. But when we know that "our help is in the name of the Lord"—that our knowledge is from his teaching—that our strength is his gift—that it is the Lord who opens our minds to understand and our hearts to receive the doctrines of life—that in patient goodness he hears our prayers, and in mercy gives us what we truly need—that his sanctifying grace makes the means which we use profitable to our souls, and that it is his Spirit which works within us to will and to do what is acceptable to himself, all boasting, all trust in ourselves are excluded—we shall be ready each one with the apostle to acknowledge, "By the grace of God I am what I am." Good works are not the cause but the fruit of our goodness. It is God who makes the tree good, and who requires of us the fruit of good living : the fruit itself, indeed, shows that the work is his. It is in perfect agreement with this doctrine of grace that we are commanded to "seek the Lord while he may be found," and to "save ourselves from this untoward generation." When we rightly understand the freedom of his grace, we must feel the justice of his reproof, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." Our part is to do what God commands, believing his word, trusting in his promise, and relying upon his grace. We must plant, and we must water, not the less, but the rather because it is God who gives the increase.

We "beseech you then, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation." Consider well what you must do to be saved ;—how great is the peril of halting between two opinions, and of neglecting this great salvation. We would be ever

cautious not to encourage an undue reliance on religious rites; but without the use of those which God has graciously appointed for our use, how can we hope to increase in grace and in godliness of living? "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." We know well that you cannot change your own hearts;—that God alone can renew a right spirit within you. But he has promised to bless your sincere efforts to know and to do his will. "Ask and you shall receive; seek and you shall find." While you are faithful to do what he commands, you may humbly hope that he will enlighten your mind, and sanctify your affections. To him that hath shall be given. To those who "order their conversation right, shall be shown the salvation of God."

The kingdom of God, or his church, is the spiritual ark, which Christ, the true Noah, has prepared for the saving of his house, and your safety requires that you be not only "not far from," but in it. The promise of salvation is to those who are within its pale. The sense in which, as St. Peter says, "Baptism now saves us," is its being ordained of Christ, as the entrance into this spiritual ark, where we are entitled to all the means of grace, and if we are faithful in the use of them, to all the promises to those who are "members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven." As our church teaches, "they that receive baptism rightly, are grafted into the church, and the promises of forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God, by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed." We should use this and the other Christian ordinances as a manifestation of our faith in Christ, of our trust in his merits, of our hope in the promises of God, and of our submission to his righteousness. In the right use of them there is great comfort; for they are tokens

of his love of our souls, and of what he has done to save them. They are sanctified means, of God's appointment, whereby we may draw nigh to him in full assurance of faith, and obtain his heavenly benediction. Where these ordinances are devoutly and faithfully observed, we may well hope that true religion is increasing. It is encouraging to all who love the gates of Zion to see multitudes thus openly confessing the name of Christ; coming to baptism, and bringing their children; renewing in confirmation, their Christian covenant, and regularly communing in the Lord's Supper. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

ALEXANDER V. GRISWOLD,

Presiding Bishop.

PASTORAL LETTER No. XIII.

FROM THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL
CHURCH, ASSEMBLED IN GENERAL CONVENTION AT PHILA-
DELPHIA, OCTOBER, A. D. 1844.

BRETHREN,

SINCE our last Pastoral Letter to you, our heavenly Father has seen fit, in his mysterious providence, to take from us two of our number, our venerable presiding brother, of the eastern diocese, and the no less highly esteemed Bishop of Virginia.

Very worthy persons having succeeded in their respective dioceses, the tears which their deaths occasioned were, in a measure, dispersed by the hand of Divine Mercy which often strikes but to heal.

The association of states which had composed the *eastern* diocese, over which the Right Rev. Alexander V. Griswold presided, has, by his death, been dissolved, and three others consecrated to take the pastoral charge of separate portions of the same flock, viz: the Rev. Doctors Manton Eastburn, over Massachusetts; J. P. K. Henshaw, over Rhode Island; and Carlton Chase, over New Hampshire.

Thus the spirit of heaviness at the loss of our senior bishop has been exchanged for the "garment of praise," and the same may be truly said of Virginia. "In the place

of mourning" for good Bishop Moore, the oil of joy has brightened the face of that beloved diocese, and caused all hearts to rejoice in the consecration of the Rev. Dr. John Johns, to be the assistant bishop, and the elevation of the Right Rev. William Meade, D. D., to be the bishop of that diocese. Two other bishops have been consecrated during this convention, viz : the Rev. Nicholas H. Cobbs, to fill the episcopate of Alabama, and Cicero Stephens Hawks, that of Missouri. Thus are we comforted in announcing to you the decease of our beloved brother prelates. As with Elijah and Elisha of old, the mantles of those whom God hath taken to himself, we trust, have fallen on others whom he hath left with us.

Brethren,—In the pastoral letter of the house of bishops, issued Anno Domini, 1835, from the pen of good Bishop White, it is thus recorded :

"It has been the practice of the bishops, that in each of their triennial addresses, they have taken occasion to call your attention to some point or points characteristic of our church, and attention to which is especially invited in existing circumstances."

The points to which the present house of bishops, under existing circumstances, would most respectfully invite your attention, are such as, we trust, will tend to settle and strengthen your minds on the true principles of our holy religion, viz : *Faith* in Christ, as distinct from merit in man; and obedience to the will of God, as evidence of the truth of that faith. Thus guarding you from the errors of Rome on the one hand, and those of the Antinomians and Solifidians on the other. In short, it shall be our aim to show you that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth," and that "if you will enter into life, ye must keep the commandments."

Nothing is more characteristic of our church than these Scriptural truths: "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."—St. John, i. 17. And again, "The Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham."—Gal. iii. 8.

"The Covenant" made with Abraham, called here "THE GOSPEL," or good tidings, was not "*a covenant of works*," as the unbelieving Jews asserted. It was a *covenant of grace, mercy and truth*, through faith in Jesus Christ, whose "day Abraham saw and rejoiced." It was a Gospel covenant which the ceremonial law could not disannul. Four hundred years passed between this Gospel covenant with Abraham and the setting forth of the law as given by Moses. "Therefore," saith the apostle, "the law given by Moses could not make the promise of salvation through the Messiah of none effect." It remained in the apostles' days the same as in the days of Abraham, and it remains the same now as then. It was and is a Gospel covenant of unbounded love and free grace, through the atonement of the Son of God. The only difference between Abraham and ourselves, is in that *he* looked forward, and we, in point of time, look backward. *He* to the Saviour then afar off to come, and *we* to the Saviour, the same Saviour, who *hath* come, now eighteen hundred years and more, to suffer *once for all* upon the cross for the sins of men. He in the dawn, we in the evening of the day of grace.

The covenant made with Abraham to give him the kingdom of heaven or everlasting life, signified by the appellation "*of that better country*," (and the earthly Canaan as type of it,) was a distinct thing from that which was "added afterwards by reason of transgression."

Just as distinct from each other were these, as the firm *foundation rock* is distinct from any frail temporary super-

structure. The Jewish ceremonial law, although itself built on the promise of the Messiah, was frail in itself, and served only a temporary purpose. It consisted of types and allegories, alluding solely to the Messiah and fulfilled in him.

The apostle, speaking of Abraham, said, "The promise that he should be heir of the world was not given to Abraham and his seed *through the LAW*, but through the righteousness of faith. For, if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise of none effect."*

Let it here be asked: On what was this "faith" based but on the promise of the atonement to be made through a then FUTURE REDEEMER?—a faith as firm as the promise was sure, that God would certainly fulfil the same, in his good time; as the same faith in his word was firm that God would raise Isaac from the dead the moment after he was slain.

In this tremendous transaction, "Abraham saw Christ's day and rejoiced." "God will provide himself with a lamb," saith he. In his own faithful mind, he saw this "Lamb of God," "slain from the foundation of the world," and looking on the promise that if he slew his son Isaac, God would raise him instantly from the dead. In him he saw, as Jesus denominated himself, "THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE." Yea: in this transaction Abraham saw Jesus Christ overcoming death, man's greatest enemy, and his greatest punishment: he saw him rise from the dead for the justification of all who should believe on his name. In this sense "he received his son Isaac in a figure" of Christ risen from the dead.

The Jews were blind to this blaze of Divine truth. They shut their eyes to its Divine instruction. They "loved

* Rom. iv. 13, 14.

darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." "The chief corner-stone, elect and precious, the builders refused." Utterly rejecting him, their true Shiloh, the sum and substance of all their religion, they fall back on the frail fabrics of their ceremonial law, declared by the apostle to be only "shadows," "types," "of good things to come," and to be fulfilled in Christ.

From this source, as from one fountain head, were all the religious errors of the Jewish faith derived. They vainly supposed that their *sacrifices* ATONED *for sin*, by inherent and appointed virtue. And it is remarkable, that in this respect, they are imitated so closely by the members of the Romish communion, who affirm that their sacrifice in the mass atones for sins. Nothing can be more evident than that they are both in deadly error; both blind to this everlasting truth, viz: THAT GOD NEVER ACCEPTED ANY SACRIFICE, OFFERING, OR ATONEMENT FOR SIN, BUT THAT WHICH WAS MADE BY THE MESSIAH, HIS SON JESUS CHRIST, "ONCE FOR ALL ON THE CROSS." A truth so plain that it is matter of wonder that any, who know the Scriptures, should be ignorant of it; and at the same time a truth so *necessary* that all religion is vain without it. The ordinances of God before the coming of his Son, adumbrated for the most part not Gospel ordinances, but the Saviour himself upon the cross: and Gospel ordinances commemorate the same Saviour. Both receive their plenitude in Christ Jesus. The former in the morning, the latter in the evening, of the day of grace; both being shadows on the dial of time, during the day of probation allotted to the church of God. Jesus Christ himself is the true and the only *Gnomon*, marking every moment by his ordinances, from the creation to the end of time.

On this dial at high noon, emphatically styled "the fulness of time," when the Sun of Righteousness was at his own

meridian, no shadow was cast on the dial. All, all was fulfilled. "It is finished," said the spotless Lamb of God as he poured out his life-blood for sinners. "It is finished," the atonement is made, which nothing else could or can make from the beginning to the end of time.

The supper of the Passover did faintly shadow this in *anticipation*. The supper of the cross, by reason of greater light, casts a deeper shade to *commemorate* the same. In neither case was there or can there be a REAL ATONEMENT, but by involving the *blasphemous* doctrine of *transubstantiation*, and the abominable idolatries of the mass.

"It is finished," said our dying Saviour, when "he gave up the ghost." How many errors of the most deadly nature have crept into the church by perverting this fundamental truth sealed by the blood of Christ! The Jews, by reason of their carnal hearts, departed from the faith of Abraham, and depended for salvation on the outward ceremonies of their law, believing that their sacrifices of themselves atoned for sin. How widely spread among the Romanists is a similar opinion, that the sacrifices of the Christian altar atone for sin! Yea, not only in the Roman Church, but in some who pretend to have rejected her errors, the same dreadful perversion of the truth seems to prevail. And will not God visit his Gentile church, as he did Jerusalem of old, for this sin? The Jews for this sin were rejected of God, and ever since have become outcasts from the Divine favour. They leaned on that false principle, that broken reed, that dangerous supposition, in believing that their sacrifices and ritual solemnities atoned for sin; and, in consequence of this, they rejected their true Messiah, and were and are still rejected of Him. In this condition of ejection, they will remain until they repent and believe the Gospel, which unto Abraham their Father was "preached before," and for this reason was called "the everlasting

gospel"—viz : that by the blood of the "Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world, and once for all poured out upon the cross, is the atonement made, and sinful man justified." Till they believe in this true foundation of all true religion, they remain in their sins.

The same may be said of those who believe in the false atonement set forth by the Romish mass in the decrees of the Council of Trent. By these decrees that whole communion was thrown into a condition similar to that of the Jews : both the one and the other held and still hold that the sacrifice itself and the ritual solemnity do atone for sin. The articles of our church afford us stable ground on which to stand in guarding you from these errors of the Church of Rome. Take these articles in the sense of their framers and as set forth and investigated by the most distinguished divines, and there can be no mistake. These articles thus interpreted, we hold in great reverence, and entreat you to consider them in the same light, listening to no interpretation that will draw you from the Protestant faith. Besides the articles, we commend to your serious consideration the homilies of our church ; and next to these the pastoral letters unanimously adopted by this house of bishops, and set forth to the whole church. Examine these pastoral letters, and you will see how decidedly they condemn all leaning to papal Rome on the one hand, and Antinomian errors on the other. How they warned you against the over-valuation of the Fathers, so as to rank with the holy Scriptures as a joint rule of faith, and at the same time how they freely admit their authority as evidence in matters of fact when determining what are the books of holy Scripture, and what was the primitive worship of the church. Nothing can be more decided than the testimony of disapprobation borne by these pastoral letters against the Romish doctrine of *purgatory*, the *invocation of saints*, the *supre-*

macy of the pope, and the *idolatries* involved in the doctrine of *transubstantiation*.

Being pledged by our consecration vows to drive from the church all false doctrine, that the pure faith of our fathers may be transmitted to our descendants as we received it, we cannot but feel deeply anxious concerning the ordination of candidates for the ministry ; for on these the character of our Protestant church, in future ages, entirely depends. We feel it our duty to declare, that no person should be ordained who is not well acquainted with the landmarks which separate us from the Church of Rome ; and being so, who will not distinctly declare himself a Protestant, heartily abjuring her corruptions, as our reformers did : and it is our solemn counsel to all professors in our theological seminaries, and all others who are concerned in the preparation of candidates for holy orders, to be faithful in their duties, that neither Romanists on the one hand, nor the enemies of the Episcopal Church on the other, may have cause to boast that we have departed in the slightest degree from the spirit and principles of the Reformation, as exemplified in the Church of England.

To keep the principles of our reformation from contamination, a careful reading of the holy Scriptures is a sure means ; and we do think it our bounden duty to enjoin this practice of our reformers on all, especially heads of families. The Old Testament being read with the New, as appointed in our Calendar, is here alluded to. We have taken them in connection, as you see, in this pastoral ; and we hope with good effect, in imprinting the truths of our holy religion on our minds, with a view to holiness of life.

We have maintained that the covenant made with Abraham is an evangelical covenant. It must follow, therefore, that all things which attended *it*, as to its operations in Abraham and his immediate descendants, are of great impor-

tance to us. If we be children of Abraham's faith, in *us* will be seen the same fruits as in Abraham. God called him out of Ur of the Chaldees, from his own country polluted by idolatry, and from his wicked kindred there. And to induce him so to do, he set before him the land of Canaan:—a land as yet unknown to him, but by Divine promise. Abraham believed this promise and obeyed this call. He went out from his country and kindred, and proceeded on his journey, "whither he knew not." And having arrived in Canaan he reposed on its soil, though as yet having no possessions in it—no, not so much as a burying-place. These things teach us that he "sought a HEAVENLY COUNTRY," and considered the *earthly* only as an emblem thereof. Thus the whole becomes, as the apostle teaches, "an ensample unto us." We also are called out of a wicked and idolatrous world, and from "our kindred in transgression unto a land of *promise*," not enjoyment; into a church militant, not yet triumphant. In this church we are to live the life of *faith* and *hope*, as Abraham did. The unbelieving inhabitants of the land saw this holy man of faith among them; but they never thought of his being, at that very time, heir to the whole country: least of all did they dream that he had set his affections on a *heavenly country*, of which the earthly Canaan was only a type. The case is the same at the present day. When ungodly men see true Christians *renounce* the world in their baptism, and freely give up its pomps and vanities, in order to inherit the *promise now*, and hereafter to enjoy the REALITY of a heavenly Canaan, a land of rest and peace, all is an enigma—an unexplained thing:—a matter of doubt, if not of ridicule and contempt. But let not true Christians be discouraged. Like Abraham's, their *gains* shall be greater than their *losses*; and our blessed Lord hath said, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the

Gospel's, the same shall save it:" "for what shall a man give in exchange for his own soul?"

It is the characteristic of unbelief to rely on present appearances. But the word of God teaches a different lesson. This lesson Abraham learned from the manner of life which God caused him to lead. From its unsettled and wandering state, he learned that the earthly promises and possessions themselves were but shadows of heavenly things: that the land which God covenanted to give him was but a type of a heavenly country; and so long as he believed and had hope in that which was above, the full enjoyment of that which was upon earth was, to his faithful mind, but of minor consequence.

As scholars in the same school of heavenly instruction, the apostle comprehends both Isaac and Jacob, as heirs of the same promises with their father Abraham; though they, like him, never owned a foot of ground in Canaan; and he expressly speaks of their raising their hopes above this world to a heavenly country by faith in God's *promises*. "By faith Abraham sojourned in a land of *promise*, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same *promise*: for he looked for a city which hath foundation, whose builder and maker is God. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off; and were persuaded of them; and embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth; for they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country, a better country, that is an heavenly, where God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city."

We have from this statement, the church's doctrine concerning several particulars. The Abrahamic being a Gospel covenant, the same as the Christian—both resting on

the atonement of the Messiah, as the only meritorious cause of proffered salvation—it is evident that the institutions of both avail only when considered as *representatives*, and are accompanied by faith in their reception. The sacrifices of Abraham, and those commanded by the law of Moses, had no value in themselves; and when performed without faith in the atonement of a coming Messiah, they had no efficacy. They were but as shadows to the substance; and when that substance was removed from the eye of faith, even the shadow was displeasing in the eyes of the Lord. “To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me?” saith the Lord. “I am full of the burnt offering of rams and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks or of lambs; bring no more vain oblations.”—Isa. i. 11. Even so it is with the ordinances of the Christian covenant. “The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.” Hence the church infers the true import of all those expressions in Scripture which tend to exalt faith and deny works; they are works of unbelief which she denies; works done without faith in Christ. These she declares are not pleasing to God, in her thirteenth Article.

But does she the same with the works of faith as in Abraham? By no means; she condemns such works as the Jews relied on; such works as the deluded Church of Rome relies on as meritorious and saving by their own operation—works as a cause, not condition of salvation; and such works also the apostle condemns; such works every true Christian condemns. But in so doing, neither Abraham nor the apostle, nor the reformed Church of England, nor the Protestant Episcopal Church of these United States of America, sets aside the necessity of works wrought through faith in Christ. Such “good works” as these, all branches of the Universal Church of Christ, as the apostle exhorts, “are careful to maintain.” (Titus iii. 8.)

Again: Contrary to the opinion of those who assert that the promises to the patriarchs either failed in themselves, or were fulfilled to their posterity only in a temporal sense, you have seen, dear brethren, that they were all in a due course of fulfilment even *then*, when it might be most truly said of them, that "they were strangers and pilgrims" in the very land of promise, for they sought another and "a better country," a reality of which Canaan was but the shadow. Even so now, we have a more during promise of a better land, compared with which the world and all its enjoyments are but as shadows. This land has been purchased for us by the sufferings of the Captain of our salvation, Jesus, our spiritual "Joshua."

We know this is taught us through an allegory; but we are also sure this allegory is divinely appointed. God's word, like the rays of the sun, reveals this heart-cheering doctrine to us, that this life is but a journey to a land of everlasting rest. The light of God's word reveals it to us,* by means of a mirror, which he holds up to us, in his Divine providence with Abraham and his descendants,† in a Divine parable. Thus, "the things of God are clearly seen," which, while in this world, would be otherwise out of sight; which same things, when we come to die, and enjoy the realities of another world, "we shall see face to face."

Consisting of body and soul, this method of teaching is necessary to man. It is necessary now, as in days of old. God teaches us by visible ordinances to realize by faith heavenly blessings. The former are "outward and visible signs," and the latter "the inward and spiritual graces," given unto us. The former, being ordained by Divine command, are the means whereby we receive the latter, and

1 Cor. xiii. 12. { * δι' εἰκόνος.
† ἐν αἰγυμῶτι.

also *pledges* that the *faithful* shall receive them. None but infidels deny this. But we must receive the doctrine as a whole, not in parts. The very nature of it implies that we can receive the outward and not the inward part. The wicked children of Abraham, after the flesh, lived in great numbers in Canaan without bestowing one thought on that heavenly rest which that blessed Lamb represented. Even so we have too much reason to believe there are now many at the Gospel feast “who have *not* on the wedding garment” of faith in the King’s Son, and his everlasting sonship with the eternal Father; but have clothed themselves with only a garment from materials of their own framing, their own self-created opinions and wicked unavailing works, in many who are circumcised but not in heart nor in spirit; many “children of the promise,” who, by reason of their wicked lives, “will never inherit the promises,” many “ingrafted by baptism” into the vine, whom the “husbandman will take away” because “they do not bring forth good fruit.” All such God will cast out in the great day. On the contrary, it is with equal truth asserted, that as he who uses the outward ordinance in faith to the most evangelical and spiritual intent, is a true child of Abraham in the best sense; even so he who despises the outward part, and disobeys the Divine command to use it in faith, and gives for a reason of his conduct, his *extraordinary love for the inward part*, most dishonours God, who appointed the one and giveth the other, according to his *promise*. Let those think of this who talk of Abraham’s *faith*, and do not as *Abraham did*.

Finally, dear brethren in the Lord, members of the family of the faithful: We, your spiritual fathers, deeply conscious of our own unworthiness, while with the apostle, we would “magnify our office,” which we received of the Lord by the laying on of hands, most earnestly and affec-

tionately exhort you not to be carried about by divers and strange doctrines, but that ye be stedfast in the faith once delivered to the saints. Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, whose work of redeeming love Abraham saw and rejoiced; whose "blood of sprinkling speaketh better things than the blood of Abel," is the grand object of our faith and joy. "Let us then go forth with him without the camp, bearing his reproach, for here we have no continuing city, but seek one to come."

Like the holy patriarch, let us believe and obey. When God giveth us his promise, let us manifest our faith by our works. Let us, as he did, leave a wicked world and all its sinful practices. Let us leave behind us our idolatrous relations, the Romanists, as he did his wicked kindred in Chaldea. Let us avoid every vice ourselves and discountenance it in others to the utmost of our ability and influence. Let us love holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord; so shall our apostolic church distinguish herself as did Abraham and his family, from the nations around, by "A CLOSER WALK WITH GOD." Let us "follow peace with all men," being courteous to all, meek, gentle and "easy to be entreated," as he was; yet when the worshippers of idols would make war upon us, and take our "kindred and their little ones" in the true faith, from us, let us arm ourselves and our household with "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," and like Abraham go forth to their rescue. Let us dwell in this land, though "*others* claim to be lords thereof;" and to all let us manifest that justice, mercy and truth, with that true charity which, more than all empty professions, will show that we are denizens of a better city, and inheritors of a better kingdom in heaven.

To conclude: The members of our communion in all places of our extensive country, have cause for fervent

gratitude to the Great Head of the church in heaven, that by the mighty power of his Holy Spirit, the present convention of a portion of his church here on earth, hath been overruled for good, and has concluded in great peace, especially in that he hath inclined the hearts of the members thereof to elect, with great unanimity, a missionary bishop for Arkansas and other territories of the United States, and who is to exercise supervision over our missions in Texas; and also three brother bishops to spread abroad, in foreign lands, the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Brethren, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. *Amen.*

PHILANDER CHASE, D. D.,

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